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Yugoslavia through official lenses

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Tom O'Brien on the Vatican exhibit • George G. Higgins on 'The Priority of Labor' • Martin Green on Katherine Anne Porter • Also: Robert Phillips, Colin L. Westerbeck, Jr., Abigail McCarthy •

The pope in Central America, the president in the pulpit

THE EDITORS

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Correspondence

Women & World Church

Bonn, Germany

To the Editors: In promoting a cause, reformers often describe their goals in terms not of what *ought to be* but of what *will be*. History is moving their way, they say, implying that we'd better get on the bandwagon. John W. Glaser uses this technique in his article, "Epoch III: the Church Feminized" [Jan. 28].

Drawing on Karl Rahner, he portrays the church as entering a "new epoch" — out of a nearly two-thousand-year-long "European epoch" into that of "World Church." He mentions some evidence to illustrate that this epoch has already begun.

From there, Glaser goes on to make explicit what he finds implicit — a "silent assumption" — in Rahner's analysis: that as World Church "will become de-Europeanized, so will it become de-masculinized." In the new epoch the church will be transformed from a male-dominated institution into "the church of both sexes, female as well as male," meaning, for example, that female priests will be accepted as normal. World Church, writes Glaser, will "expand beyond two boundaries: horizontally beyond the boundary of European culture; vertically beyond the boundary of male culture."

Glaser provides no evidence to explain why the "horizontal" expansion will promote the "vertical." This is odd, because such a result is hardly self-evident. It might be if non-European cultures, or even at least the Christian leaders in them, were characterized by a firm dedication to feminine equality. In reality, the status of women in those cultures generally suffers by comparison with that of women in European cultures.

It is difficult to understand, therefore, how a shift to a de-Europeanized church will foster a move forward on feminist questions, including the "seminal" one that Glaser cites: the ordination of women.

World Church, as described by Rahner, could indeed be the wave of the future, but, for the male/female church Glaser foresees and desires, it may also have a powerful undertow, the world being what it is.

ROBERT A. SENSER

'Sophia perennis'

San Francisco, Calif.

To the Editors: As one whose contact with the thought of Guenon, Schuon, Coomaraswamy, and Nasr has immeasurably deepened his own roots in the Christian tradition, I wholeheartedly concur with Robert Elwood's assessment of S.H. Nasr's book *Knowledge and the Sacred* as "splendid" [Jan. 28]. I would go further: it is the best and most complete introduction to the principles of the *sophia perennis* yet to appear.

However, when he attempts to criticize certain aspects of S.H. Nasr's argument, Mr. Elwood unfortunately does little more than trivialize and misrepresent the cogency and authenticity of Nasr's thesis; and in so doing, he reveals how difficult it is for even a mind sympathetic to the sapiential tradition to overcome the all-pervasive influence of the modernistic mindset. Elwood begins by labeling Nasr's position "neo-traditionalism" which has the effect of relativising and devaluing the perspective of Tradition; it becomes only one "school of thought" among many others, characterized by "bookish, hothouse" scholars suffering from a nostalgia for the past. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the writings of Schuon and Nasr have such clarity, depth, and force that one is compelled to ask "By what authority do these men speak?" The answer to my mind is, clearly, by the authority of realized knowledge or operative Grace.

Once we call the sapiential perspective "neo-traditionalism" it is only a short step to dismissing Nasr's critique of the modern world as excessive and indiscriminatory, the negative rhetoric of a "romantic conservative." Yet throughout the book, Nasr carefully discriminates between the contemporary world in which the spiritual transmission of the sacred knowledge of Tradition is always a possibility, and modernism, the secularist, relativist, profane frame of reference in which we all swim today like alewives in polluted waters: "Tradition is not opposed to all that exists in the world today and, in fact, refuses to equate all that exists today with modernism." (pg. 85)

Elwood calls the traditional argument "fatuous" for failing to recognize the "ecstatic" contributions of Wittgenstein and Heidegger. This only goes to show how he has failed to grasp the point. From the perspective of sacred knowledge, or gnosis, Wittgenstein's mental reductionism is a prime example of the poverty of thought without the light of the Intellect; and Heidegger's ardent cult of subjectivity is only an example of the absence of intellectual intuition, for lack of which he cultivates the small ecstacy of an alleged "ontaological" self-liberation. And finally, what could be more "fatuous" than to imply that thinkers of the caliber of Schuon and Nasr fail to perceive the value of "twentieth century mainstream philosophy" only because that philosophy has neglected to attach the label "sacred" to its peregrinations?

Perhaps the prophetic witness of the *sophia perennis* is best summed up in these words of Jacques Maritain: "When it comes to absolutely essential matters that have been ignored by an intellectually degraded epoch, and when one is dealing with the great idols of the day (venerated moreover by a great many

(Continued on page 190)

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THE POPE & POLITICS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

LANDING IN Central America's passiontide at the beginning of this month, Pope John Paul II kissed the ground. It has become his trademark. Immediately he spoke of "a clamor that rises from these lands," as if, ear to earth, he had heard the voices of the voiceless caught amidst the fires of violence. It was this "sorrowful clamor," he said, "that I would like to give voice to with my visit."

Did he succeed? Each gesture and sentence of the pope was scrutinized for its implications. Was he calling for negotiations — "dialogue" — between the government and the insurgents in El Salvador? Well, it sounded enough that way to provoke Ambassador Hinton into swiftly warning against wishful interpretations of the pope's message. In denouncing murder, torture, and kidnapping in Guatemala even while greeting General Rios Montt, was the pope rebuking the Guatemalan head of state sharply, as some reports put it, or gently, as others saw it? Did the pope's emphasis on church unity and hierarchical authority in Nicaragua put the church definitively on a collision course with the Sandinista government and signal a break with the base communities of the "popular church"?

"Should the pope have gone to Central America?" asked the London *Economist*, and its own answer seemed to be "no." The pope risked exploitation by local politicians, who could filter his messages through their government-controlled media, and what might he gain to offset the risk? "The trouble," wrote the *Economist*, "is that he had nothing constructive to offer in the way of suggestions to stop the killing." There are other criticisms that might be made of this papal trip. Why the grueling pace? Besides being an affront to the pope's health, these flying stops allow little time for the kind of exchange and observation that simply cannot be reproduced in official reports to the Vatican. For the rest of the world, the papal allocutions and gestures pile up, one on top of another, until the whole is a jumble. Adding to the confusion is the ambiguity that remains about the political dimensions of papal journeys like this one. The pope urges social justice, he calls for peace, he denounces violence, he warns against ideological manipulation — and he eschews politics! The fact is that in a context like Central America's — or like Poland's next June — John Paul II's every act is politically charged. It helps a bit when he warns clergy and church leaders to avoid a kind of politics he terms "partisan" — but only a bit.

The pope's vision of the church is both energizing and disturbing. It retains much of the Vatican's traditional top-down style. One cannot help thinking that many of the themes that so distinguish John Paul — and distinguish him in particular from certain nineteenth-century predecessors — were introduced into Catholic ranks by individuals who might not be tolerated, let alone welcomed, by the pope's vision of church. Dialogue within the church is as necessary as dialogue among political factions if Central America is going to emerge better from the current turmoil. That

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is the general truth. But how to apply it in a specific instance, most notably in Nicaragua, with the conflict between "popular church" and hierarchy, is another matter. The pope's experience tells him that an embattled situation demands a disciplined, unified church; and the extraordinary behavior of the Sandinistas in politicizing the pope's arrival, in trying to exclude Archbishop Obando y Bravo from the public eye as much as possible, and in allowing hecklers access to the public address system during the pope's homily, indicates exactly how embattled the situation in Nicaragua is becoming.

Despite the difficulties of stepping a narrow line between left and right, between the search for justice and "partisan politics," between preaching reconciliation and firming the ranks, the pope did succeed in Central America. The *Economist*'s realism, as so frequently, is far from realistic. John Paul II did not bring a ten-point peace plan in his suitcase — nor has he the divisions to enforce it. But there are other ways of building peace. Dominating John Paul's journey was the effort to maintain some open space amidst the terrible violence — to keep the church from falling back into accommodation with oligarchies or from being coopted by Marxist-Leninists; to maintain the church's rejection of both the injustice of "pure economic capitalism" and the collectivism of one-party vanguards. It is important that the biggest crowds Central America has known came out not to celebrate any of the region's reigning hatreds, but to declare that fidelity to the Gospel was ultimate and that the Gospel will not provide social cement for any of the lockjawed options Central America is embattled over.

Is this abstracted idealism or, as the *Economist* wrote, "a helpless plea"? Or is it the consequence of hearing the voices of those caught in the middle and wanting, through liturgical gesture, through admonitions, through the very gathering of crowds, to translate that "sorrowful clamor" into a murmur of hope? We think the latter.

PRESIDENTIAL PULPIT

The pope was not the only world leader to foray into religion and politics at the beginning of March. Ronald Reagan delivered a remarkable address to the National Association of Evangelicals, and was promptly applauded and criticized for all the wrong reasons. The president was applauded because, in striking contrast to the pope, he said exactly what his audience wanted to hear. No walking a fine line here, no discomforting of both right and left, no braving his audience. The president is in favor of traditional values—so is the pope. That's where the comparison ends.

If the applause was easy and predictable, so was the criticism. The normally admirable columnist Anthony Lewis declared that the speech was "outrageous" and "primitive." "If there is anything that should be illegitimate in the American system, it is such use of sectarian religiosity to sell a political program." Mr. Lewis has a very low threshold for "sectarian religiosity." Only at one point did the president venture beyond references to the "Judeo-Christian tradition" and the Supreme Being of Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. That was in the sentence, "There is sin and evil in the world, and we are enjoined by Scripture and the Lord Jesus to oppose it with all our might." Pretty sectarian.

We also wish Mr. Lewis had reflected a bit before writing this paragraph: "Any *President* is entitled to give uplifting talks about moral or spiritual questions. But *Mr. Reagan* was doing something very different. *He* was purporting to apply religious concepts to the contentious technical particulars of arms programs. Can the concept of good and evil determine whether 10,000 nuclear warheads is enough? . . . Whether a nuclear freeze is likely to make the world more or less safe?" Those italics are ours, not his; try rereading that passage substituting "church leader" and "Catholic hierarchy" and "the National Conference of Catholic bishops." Mr. Lewis was merely putting the same handcuffs on the president that conservatives would like to see put on the bishops.

That connection was made a few days later by William Safire, Lewis's conservative counterpart among *New York Times* columnists. Safire added a little ignorance to the confusion, misrepresenting in several ways the Catholic bishops' pastoral letter on nuclear arms. But basically Mr. Safire, who is a *laissez-faire* kind of conservative, doesn't want religion and politics "poaching" on the same terrain. "Assume that the President is 100 percent right about morality or that the clergy is 100 percent right about foreign policy. The fact that each is playing in the other's ballpark is what is wrong." Like Anthony Lewis, Mr. Safire is willing to tolerate a little uplift: "politicians are entitled to their 'personal' ethical or moral stands." But no more than that. "Let clerics be clerics and let the president be president."

What both these opinions do is look for a shortcut. It's easier to rule the president out of order than look at what he said. The problem is not that, a Christian president addressing a Christian audience, he talked morality, and in vaguely Christian terms. It's true that putting political arguments in any proximity to God-talk always presents certain dangers. But the real problem is that Mr. Reagan was *not* "100 percent right." His address to the evangelicals was filled with half-truths. Example: the sharp contrast that the president drew between his audience—"you who are keeping America great by keeping her good"—and the followers of "modern-day secularism" who have discarded "the tried and time-tested values upon which our civilization is based," whose "value system is radically different from that of most Americans." Now we would not deny the serious differences between believers and modern secularists. But the *truth* is that secularists have not discarded all the values of our civilization; indeed, secularists have frequently maintained some of these values more determinedly than Christians. The *truth* is that secularists and churchpeople, rather than holding radically different value systems, have been all too apt to live by exactly the same lights. The *truth* is that the sources of erosion of traditional values—the president dwelled on sexuality and abortion—go far deeper than Mr. Reagan, unlike the pope, is willing to look.

There is nothing wrong in pointing up on moral grounds, as

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the president did, the evil of totalitarian leaders or the folly of appeasement or the spiritual nature of today's crisis or even the weaknesses of the nuclear freeze. About the likely consequences of the freeze and the merits of his own administration's program of arms negotiations, we believe the president is factually wrong. But about the rest, the problem was less with what he said than what he didn't say. Must there really be only *one* "focus of evil in the modern world"? When C.S. Lewis wrote of modern evil being "conceived and ordered . . . in clear . . . well-lighted offices, by quiet men with white collars and cut fingernails and smooth-shaven cheeks who do not need to raise their voices," is it fair to think that Lewis imagined all those well-lit offices and quiet men to be on the other side of the Oder-Neisse line? Outside of a rather self-congratulatory comment on the *past* struggle for racial justice in America, the president saw very little but good in America's own heart. He called upon the evangelicals to do anything but repent.

And he closed, incidentally, with a quotation from that notorious enemy of biblical religion, "one of our Founding Fathers, Thomas Paine." No one noticed. The enemy is within the gates.

West German elections

THE ECONOMIC FACTOR

DEPLOYMENT'S NOT SETTLED

ONLY A FEW TIMES since World War II has an election been more closely watched than the one in West Germany on March 6. In Paris and Washington especially, but also throughout Europe people seemed determined to find definitive answers about where Germany was moving, and what was the significance of these early elections and this confusing new party that threatened to replace an older one in parliament. In Germany itself, however, I found few Germans who thought the election that dramatic, although they admitted it was more exciting than normal German politics.

There certainly are new political currents in Germany today—is it not time? The Christian Democrats (CDU) with their Bavarian partners, the CSU, the Social Democrats (SPD), and the swing party, the Free Democrats (FDP), have dominated West German political life since the first Bundestag election in 1949. Until this year, no other national party emerged to challenge the orthodox and the predictable.

Now the Greens—even the name seems unGerman!—a conglomerate of protest groups, have skillfully achieved a parliamentary foothold. Their arrival coincides with a decline in the Free Democrats. Yet even if these minor party trends continue (and they are separate phenomena with different explanations), the political footings of the Federal Republic will probably not shift rapidly, nor importantly. The two major parties still received 87 percent of the votes this month.

For CDU Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the victory with nearly 49 percent of the vote meant continued and more secure rule. The FDP's additional 6.9 percent both keeps that party in ruling coalition with the CDU and maintains the Free Democrats in national politics.

For the Social Democrats, the election results are more mixed but not without important benefits. While losing is generally worse than winning in politics, this is not the best time to be in political control in West Germany. Unemployment is high, growth is low, dissatisfaction is increasing. An unpopular missile deployment may soon provoke resistance.

A second reason for SPD satisfaction is the small vote for the Greens who gained 5.9 percent, mostly it is thought, at the cost of the Social Democrats. Last fall polls indicated a much higher loss by the SPD to the left radicals. If the Green vote had been much larger, an SPD-Green coalition, which the Social Democrats do not want, would have been suggested. But if there had been no Green presence in parliament, the SPD would be forced itself to represent the strong anti-nuclear, anti-missile, and pro-ecology movements. So there is some satisfaction in measured defeat for the SPD especially if they can eventually retain the Green voters.

The two major parties thus had opposite hopes for the minor parties on their flanks. The CDU wanted a strong FDP in order to keep a solid majority in the Bundestag for the next four years without increasing its dependence on CSU leader Frans Josef Strauss. The SPD, in contrast, wanted the smallest possible Green victory as long as the radicals met the five percent threshold to enter the Bundestag.

Americans tended to see the German election as a horse race with the single issue being missile deployment. For German voters, this analysis was neither accurate nor relevant to their major concern, the economy. A massive 10 percent loss from the last election was the price paid by the SPD, in power for thirteen years, for the sharpest recession the country experienced in the postwar period.

While one may excuse the media simplifications of a foreign election, how can one explain the crude attempts by the Reagan administration to show openly its support for the CDU candidate (and crude attempts by Moscow on behalf of the SPD)? A total concentration on the missile issue and a failure to understand either its secondary role in the campaign or the German aversion to any new missiles regardless of party is the only explanation.

Two dangers flow from this misreading of the elections. First, Washington could assume that the missile decision is now settled or at least easier to settle in Germany and in Europe. Instead, Kohl needs help and understanding from Washington in finding a deployment decision which recognizes that a majority of West Germans polled still oppose new U.S. missiles in their country. Second, Kohl's major task is the economy and a new increase in U.S. interest rates can thwart its recovery. With skill, luck, and some help from Washington, Kohl can succeed. Without these he may fail and

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his position on missiles will make no difference if he does.

CLIFFORD P. HACKETT

(Clifford P. Hackett served for ten years in the Foreign Service, principally in Germany, and for thirteen years on the staffs of House and Senate committees involved with foreign affairs. He now runs an exchange program between the Congress and the European Parliament and recently paid a return visit to Germany.)

Labor

$10,000 UNDERSTANDING
STEELWORKERS MAKE CONCESSIONS

HOW BAD was the concessions package granted by the United Steelworkers of America to steel company bargainers?

"It smells but it doesn't stink." That summed up the attitude of Chuck Molnar, president of Local 2599 at Bethlehem Steel Corporation's Johnstown, Pennsylvania mill. Molnar's resignation was widely shared by members of the union's Basic Steel Industry Conference (BSIC), who voted 169-63 to approve major wage and benefit concessions on March 2.

But when the local presidents left the hothouse environment of the Pittsburgh conference hotels for the ravaged steel towns whose future hung in the balance, they encountered an unexpectedly hostile response. In East Chicago, at Inland's Local 1010 union hall, District Director Jack Parton was booed off the stage when he told a packed membership meeting that the unions' concessions to the company weren't "enough" — only a band-aid when the steel industry needed major surgery. And General Counsel Bernard Kleiman, the USW's chief strategist, was not even allowed to defend his views by the angry Inland unionists. Adjusting to the unexpected political currents, two presidents of major midwestern steel locals let it be known that they'd voted against the contract, despite having said the opposite in Pittsburgh.

All the world has praised the steelworkers' "statesmanship" and "moderation"; where does this bitter anger come from?

To answer that question, we have to look at the contract.

To begin with, steelworkers gave back a total of $250-400 per month in wages, cost-of-living adjustments, and benefits, depending on inflation, over the course of the forty-one-month agreement, according to an analysis by the Mideast Center for Labor Research. That adds up to more than $10,000.

Is that a lot of money to sacrifice? Imagine that your own fortnightly paycheck was cut $100. Only Chrysler workers ever took a comparable cut, when their company was going bankrupt and Congress had them over a barrel.

Furthermore, the contract will actually eliminate jobs. At the companies' insistence, the USW surrendered the extended vacation; 5,000-7,000 employes will no longer be needed to "fill-in."

Finally, let's make a calculation few supporters of labor statesmanship ever perform. While the concessions package restores the steelworkers' *base* pay to its current level by February 1, 1986, the cost-of-living adjustments unionists forgo will almost certainly never be restored. Which is to say that if steelworkers forego $1.00/hr. in cost-of-living increases during the agreement, they will lose that $1.00/hr. for the rest of their working lives. A steelworker working in the mills until the year 2003 could lose more than $40,000.

What did the USW obtain in return? The union went into the negotiations seeking job guarantees as well as aid for the unemployed. It got some of the latter, precious little of the first.

On a positive note, the steel companies substantially increased their payments into the supplementary unemployment benefit fund, making possible immediate help for laid-off union members, many of whom are having trouble meeting car and house payments now that their state unemployment benefits have run out. Furthermore, the companies established a one-time-only early retirement incentive with generous pension supplements.

But when it came to job guarantees, the USW ended up with . . . words. The steel companies pledged to "apply the savings received from the moderations contained in this Agreement exclusively to the needs of the existing facilities covered by this Agreement. . . . The Company shall not use any of the savings it obtains from such moderations under this Agreement to invest in other business segments of the Company."

Unfortunately, Joe Samargia, president of Local 1938 in Virginia, Minnesota, believes that it will be impossible for the union to determine whether or not the companies are carrying out this pledge. Regardless of the fine words, the companies' investment decisions will continue to be based on a simple criterion — expectations of future profits. Or to state it simply, the reinvestment pledge was window-dressing.

THE HIGH COST of concessions and the meager benefits they provide explain why steelworkers have responded negatively. But, one might ask, if the proposal were so unfavorable, why did the local presidents accept it?

To answer that question, let's transport ourselves to Pittsburgh, in the midst of the fifteen-day bargaining session. Local presidents sit around the hotels, far from their power bases, waiting anxiously for information about the progress of talks. "It was the most confusing situation you can imagine down there," recalls Bob Thornburgh, president of Local 1618, Sharon, Pennsylvania.

The presidents are under unremitting pressure from leaders and staff representatives of the international union to be reasonable, to reach some sort of agreement. As the self-imposed March 1 deadline nears, USW leaders raise the ante. USW Vice-President Joe Odorcich tell local presidents, "If you're not here to make concessions, you might as well go home."

And then, at the last moment, international bargainers re-

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veal the contract terms. Immediately, the word goes round, "It's much better than November." And it's true: compared to the concessions proposal which the local presidents overwhelmingly rejected on November 19, the new pact is moderate. Presidents caught between fear of a strike and fear of a membership determined to resist concessions can claim a partial victory — "We forced those companies to scale down their demands, for sure."

And for one crucial group of presidents, the March agreement appeared to be a lifesaver. These were the leaders of the List 3 locals, representing steel warehouses, container factories, fabricating shops, and service centers. In November, USW bargainers had acceded to the companies' demands to sever the sixty List 3 locals from the Basic Labor Agreement covering workers in basic steel. This would have inevitably led to drastic gutting of the locals' contracts; they did not stand for it. They rose in revolt and led the successful opposition to the November 19 proposal.

On March 1, the situation seemed different. The new concessions proposal specifically stated that "The Settlement applies in full force to all non-steel producing, non-raw materials units as it has in the past." It looked like victory. The List 3 Presidents swung behind the concessions agreement, and ensured its ratification on March 2.

A week later, things looked different. As the euphoric atmosphere prevailing in Pittsburgh wore off, the presidents began to study the fine print. They noticed that the concessions agreement established a procedure that, according to Bob Thornburgh, "sets us up for a threat to be shut down by the company unless we agree to withdraw from the Basic Labor Agreement." Thornburgh now laments, "If I had it to do over again. . . ."

BUT IT'S DONE. At a time when steel orders are increasing, mills rehiring, and economic prospects brightening (at least temporarily), steelworker local presidents have made the most far-reaching concessions in modern labor history. They did so in sadness and anger, not out of any conviction that their decision would stabilize the steel industry nor generate jobs. Behind the local presidents' decision to approve givebacks lay the steel companies' unrelenting pressure to beat down labor costs, and the USW international leadership's passionate conviction that only wage moderation (and import restrictions) can save the steel industry. Faced with such strong pressures, and lacking strong leadership of their own, the local presidents finally yielded.

But it should not be forgotten that their resistance in November forced the companies to moderate their demands. And forced the USW to consult more widely than before. The union will be the better for it.

And the 145,000 steelworkers now unemployed? Most have little to look forward to. Corporate plans to combine and eliminate jobs, speed up work, introduce new technology, and shut "excess" capacity ensure that most laid-off steelworkers will never go back to work in the mills regardless of economic conditions. Only government action to redirect corporate investment and stabilize American industry could solve their problem. It does not look imminent. DAVID BENSMAN

(David Bensman, who previously reported on the steel concessions negotiations in these pages, teaches labor studies at Rutgers University.)

Government in the 1980s

SIX MODEST PROPOSALS

HOW TO REVITALIZE THE PARTIES

EIGHT YEARS AGO political scientists and political columnists were writing about the demise of the Republican party. Two years ago, we were told the Democrats were experiencing an identity crisis, or even, a "coalition crisis." After the election of Ronald Reagan, the talk was of a "turn to the right." William Safire and others have now prophesied a "turn back" to the left. All agree that political parties in America are in a state of flux and trouble. For many people who think about such things, the decline of party is a worry, not because the two parties have offered us relevant policy or personality choices over the last two decades, but because the end of parties may leave us to the politics of political action committees, consultants, and Pavlovian TV advertisements. Here are six proposals, humbly offered, for the revitalization of political parties in America.

One: Repeal the Federal Election Act. This is a "reform" which has left us in worse shape than where we came in. Spending is at more obscene levels than ever. Special interests, through their PAC's, have taken over the fund-raising mechanism from parties and nearly taken over the function of recruitment of candidates as well. Only individual contributions and activities have been limited by the law. The Federal Election Commission is, after the I.R.S., the most inept, intrusive, and unfair bureaucracy in the federal government. Federal funding for presidential candidates is a bad principle, is opposed by most Americans, and has failed to hold down the cost of campaigns as it was intended to do.

The federal government ought not to regulate the process by which it is chosen. If the process is open and competitive and free, the parties have a better chance of renewal.

Two: Abolish the presidential primary system. It does not foster a discussion of issues or ideas. It does not produce candidates of maximum experience or knowledge. It does not foster grass roots activity. Though the primaries did not start out this way, they have become almost purely show business and hype.

The "new politics" of 1968 and 1972 was really the old. It was about grass roots organization. Whether it be by Sam Brown, Jesse Jackson, or Richard Daley, organizing is the door-to-door politics of actual persons, and is preferable, both

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in process and result, to the primary politics of CBS, NBC, Jody Powell, and Gerald Rafshoon.

A caucus system would foster political organization *and* be open to new political initiatives and personalities. We need to maximize *both* professionalism and participatory amateurism to revive parties.

Three: Keep the way open for independent and third force candidacies. Contrary to conventional wisdom (based I think on a European model of political parties) third force candidates have not hurt but helped the American party system. Since our system has developed around two loose non-ideological parties, third candidates and parties have provided an outlet for discontent, fertile ground for development of issues the major parties could not or would not develop or discuss, and new directions for moribund confused parties, not to mention new identities for collapsed or defunct ones. Lincoln was a third-party candidate.

Four: Make money an issue: As long as it is possible for candidates to, in effect, buy nominations by purchasing so much television time as to make their own a household name and bury their opponents', candidates will not see the efficacy, or perhaps possibility, of trying to organize. A candidate with three to five million dollars to spend on a primary can afford to ignore the party completely, or may win its grudging allegiance as its own ticket to solvency.

The Democrats are now saying that our representative system is in "dire straits" because they have so much less money than do the Republicans. They ought to follow the leads of Senator William Proxmire and retired Ohio Congressman Charles Vanick. Both men campaigned by making spending an issue, not by asking for more money or saying the Feds should provide it, but by announcing they would not spend what they already had, and would accept or collect no more. They campaigned against exorbitant spending itself, and against the selling of candidates, by relying on old-fashioned political organization and unique campaign techniques like handshaking and meeting the voters.

Five: Routinize newspaper- and TV-sponsored debates. Since the media does so little to inform the public anyhow, it might at least help to reduce the costs of campaigns by offering free air time, or newspaper space, for debate. This has worked in New York City and New York State in the case of the *New York Times*. In the recent New York gubernatorial race, Mario Cuomo might not have been able to defeat Mayor Koch of New York City had he not received the exposure and credibility lent him by a series of debates sponsored by that venerable newspaper. Koch outspent Cuomo by wide margins.

A long series of debates keeps the candidates off the road. Makes life easier for reporters. Gives candidates an opportunity to put forward policy and program, and lessens the need for purchased air time. It is really a variation of the old Southern practice of two candidates campaigning together. If the expectation of debates becomes ritualized, paid advertisements might eventually wither away. This is bad news in immediate terms for TV stations, but the longer and deeper view is that the shift would return commercial air time exclusively to personal and hygienic needs and anxieties. TV is bad for politics and bad for sports.

Six: Encourage civics teachers and political science professors to return to the instruction of citizenship. High school students now watch movies about social problems. College freshmen discuss the breadth and depth of their own ignorance and passivity. And when I was a first-term graduate student, my American Government professor insisted that "the people" did not exist and that "civics book democracy" was a quaint and unscientific approach to common problems. This is a justification for privatism and a prescription for abdication of freedom and responsibility to large and impersonal bureaucratic "forces." Students must be taught not social science but the duties and honor of liberty.

None of these proposals necessitates legislation. They require only a bit of discipline, vigor, and that measured degree of optimism and hope republican democracy depends upon.

KEITH BURRIS

(Keith Burris, a previous contributor, teaches political science at Washington & Jefferson College.)

Of several minds: *Abigail McCarthy*

BRIDGING THE CHASM

DELICATE FILAMENTS OF U.S.-USSR AGREEMENT

IT WAS a glorious evening but in the midst of it I was struck with the thought that the visitor from outer space or even the visitor from another culture might well wonder what it was all about. Handel's almost forgotten *Hercules* was revived by the Handel Festival orchestra for a premiere at the Kennedy Center. For three hours and more a rapt audience listened to the alternating recitative, choral renditions, arias, and orchestral music. At the end, unwearied, they rose cheering and applauding and called the conductor, singers, and players back again and again.

The stranger from another world might well be confounded. What would he have seen and heard? He would have seen six people standing at lecterns taking turns singing words apparently in response to each other but directed to the audience. He would have gleaned from the program that the tall bald man in boots and dinner clothes was a mighty warrior home from the wars; that the mature woman of commanding presence and clad in a beautiful gold-bordered sari-like dress was an innocent young princess and his captive;

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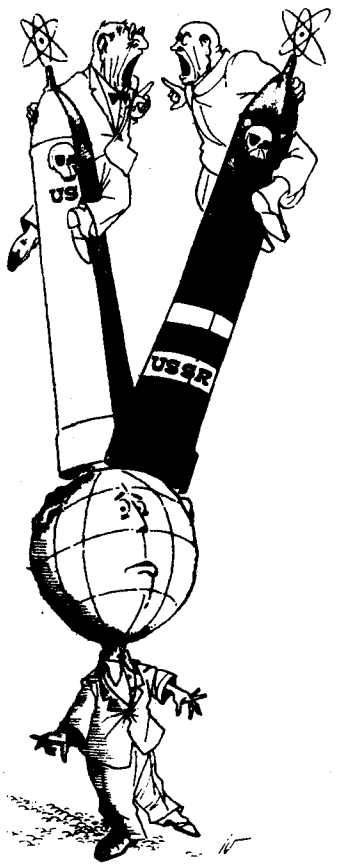
that the equally mature black man with the tenor voice was his son; that the handsome woman in black trousers and glittering sequin jacket was Lichas, a young herald — and so on. Might not he, as he listened and watched and observed our acceptance — no, our enthusiastic approval — of all this, think that there was something he had missed, something he did not understand?

To add to his confusion he would see behind these singers a group of men, and a few women, industriously and vigorously plucking, hitting, sawing at, blowing on, and fingering a variety of contrivances, thus causing them to emit sounds which — depending on the conventions of his own culture — he might or might not find pleasing. And behind them still another group of singers who seemed given to sententious, if melodious, comment on the interchange of the first group. He could well be astounded to know that these singers and players are content to devote their lives to the practice and disciplines which enabled them to be part of this performance and the recipients of our applause.

The history of any art in any culture is made up of myriad agreements on the basis of which that art advances or is held back. These agreements are sometimes unconscious and can be as simple as the first agreement that blowing on a hollow reed could be a pleasant accompaniment to the chant of a lonely shepherd communing with the spirits of stream and forest. They can be conscious and the agreement of a sophisticated audience to the adaptation of an old device to new directions in music — such as Handel's use of the "secular oratorio" — a contradiction in terms as the critics point out.

The oratorio, for example, is thought to have been invented by St. Philip Neri as a means of enticing the fractious and worldly youths of Rome to church. Oratorios were originally dramatic musical entertainments in two parts divided by a sermon. The subject matter was, of course, religious, but the dances and songs were based on the popular entertainment of the day. When the oratorio was brought from the church to the stage the name was retained even when the subject matter was no longer religious. It



was more or less a matter of agreement that oratorios were for the ear alone, operas for eye and ear. The agreement has lasted from Handel's time to our own — over two hundred years. And yet an oratorio like *Hercules* in which the second act with the highly tense and passionate exchange between the hero and his jealous wife is the stuff of drama could just as well be staged like an opera. It is a musical drama.

The curious agreements of the musical drama moved from country to country, from Italy to the German states, from the German states to England, and the acceptances of the conventions grew until they now spread throughout the world — all the way around from the tip of Alaska on one side of the Bering Strait to the tip of Siberia on the other.

It occurred to me, as I enjoyed the transcendent compromise which is *Hercules* that if we and the Russians can and do share, in just this one aspect of our culture, so many unwritten and unsaid agreements, we must be knit together in many other ways. Granted there are differences of perception and composition even in the stuff of the musical drama. I remember vividly my first meeting with a now very senior Soviet official. It must have been thirty years ago at a small formal dinner. (There were agreements there, too — unwritten, unsaid — about "black tie" dressing, and the order decreed for the putting of food on the table, the order called courses.) After dinner the official's wife was prevailed on to sing.

I can see her now — fresh-faced, pretty, plumpish — standing in the curve of the grand piano and singing in a clear, true voice. Each song was preceded with a grave précis of the content. "The worker in the field is happy that he can grow grain for the fatherland"; "The girl and the boy are in love but they give each other up so that he can go help a collective make its quota." Well, perhaps not just those themes but ones very similar! (And yet were some of the presuppositions behind those lyrics really more strange than those behind "I've Been Working on the Railroad" "Frankie and Johnny" when you come to think of it?) At any rate the musical agreements held. The songs were pleasant and we enjoyed them. The music superseded the words.

Negotiation is also an art and is based on a much shorter history and far fewer consensual agreements than is music. The Treaty of Paris after the Revolution — the treaty which formally gave our nation life in the eyes of other nations — took almost five years to negotiate and occupied the full energies of our best minds for that time — Franklin, Adams, Jay, and others. And that was a Treaty between adversaries with a common history and ties of pride and blood. As we try to bridge the chasm between ourselves and the Soviet Union in order to reach an arms agreement we can take heart in the fact that underlying the one great difference there is a network of tiny filament-like agreement on things which combine the seemingly contradictory and the absurd in such a way as to produce the transcendent music. Can we not hope that the same might be true of peace? Everything depends on our believing in the possibility, and finding, and building on the agreements which do exist.

ABIGAIL McCARTHY

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Of plaster statues & romantic heresy

JOHN LYON

ONE OF THE CHARACTERISTICS which certainly proves the soundness, vitality and indestructibility of the Roman Catholic church is that she has survived her own iconography. To have grown up Catholic anytime during these last two or three hundred years has meant to have had a good chance that one's religious life would be inundated with graphic and plastic art which at its best could be described as sappy, in the middle of its range as pandering to pruriency, and at its worst as outrightly solicitous of responses in which sexual libido and sado-masochism are promiscuously mixed. Any of my contemporaries know the sort of art I refer to: holy cards sporting the most peculiar looking men and women; statuary of androgynous males and romantically prurient females (sort of piously attired "Barbarellas"), which are so corruptly displayed and confected as to suggest that they are really cast of sugar rather than plaster; paintings of a St. Sebastian so full of arrows as to look like a human porcupine, writhing in romantic agony; and crucifixes on which the dead Christ's hips have an "engaging" offset. If there is any truth in Blake's suggestion that we become what we behold, then such abominable graphic art and statuary ought to be destroyed. Art ought to be an aid to worship; instead, it is often an argument against sanctity and belief. If heaven is filled with the sappy sort of creatures our art suggests — well, then, as that bit of believer's *galgenhumor* has it: "Heaven for climate; hell for conversation."

One does not have to have grown up prior to the Second Vatican Council to have been beset by bad church art. Bad art is not a problem of the past alone. It is a permanent problem. Broad and flappy banners droop about our altars today like wash on a Marrakesh clothes line, only without the pungency, color, and fittingness of the latter. The banners, inscribed with Gospel messages or those of some latter-day prophet (e.g., Kahlil Gibran), are almost always devoid of representational art. This suggests that a sort of iconoclasm has, perhaps unconsciously, taken possession of the Catholic mind in America. That would be a shame, if it were the case. But the provocations to iconoclasm have been regular and serious over the past centuries.

Iconoclasm literally means a "breaking of images." Whether or not the images are being broken in the Catholic churches of America I do not know; but they certainly have been disappearing over the past generation. This might be taken as a sign of a largely unconscious awareness of the blight which they have spread, which awareness in its turn would be a sign of revitalization in the church and a certain indication of the work of the Holy Spirit. However, the disappearance of the statues could also be taken as a sign of a general coming to disbelieve in saints, or a settling conviction of the frivolity of their cults.

There was much that was frivolous in the cults of the saints, no doubt. And that frivolity was raised exponentially by the frivolity associated with various para-liturgical cults and devotions: First Fridays, First Saturdays, Third Thursdays; Fatimite eschatology, the Infant Jesus of Prague, Bingo. That frivolity has turned on us with a vengeance.

The fashion for feckless representational art having passed, however, what is to be feared is that we are drifting artlessly into other feckless fashions: The fashion for non-representational art, and the fashion for a certain kind of banner-bearing: sticky felt on floppy felt. Though still believing we are made in the image and the likeness of God, and that God became man and dwelt among us, we are yet coming to deprive ourselves more and more of the human image in church art. We are doing this, perhaps, out of revulsion bred by reflection on our own insipid productions of the past few centuries. And into the vacuum created by the removal of statues and paintings from our churches has moved the processional and stationary standard. As condign punishment for our previous poor taste in representational art we face a generation or two of droopy pennants.

Whether what is happening is revitalization or simply another form of degeneration—or a mixture of both—we can-

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not change our inheritance. Reflecting on it briefly here may be of some service to us in our present difficulties.

THE HOUSE in which I grew up in Chicago had been owned before us by a family whose breadwinner worked for a large statuary company which provided all the Rose of Limas, Bernadettes and Francis de Saleses for half the Midwest. When we moved in, the basement was filled with "factory seconds," as it were, of these pestilential images: one-winged angels, noseless Josephs, partially dismembered disciples. My mother, a pious Irish Catholic, and my father, who at that time was not many years removed from having been a generic Protestant, faced a certain dilemma about the disposal of the mutilated madonnas and disfigured disciples. Fortunately, rather than painting them pink or blue and rotating them serially through a shrine made of an old bath tub stood on end and partially sunk in the ground, they decided to pulverize them with a hammer and use the resultant fragments as fertilizer for the garden soil, which was—we hoped—low in calcium.

I was about six years old when we moved into that house, and it was no minor trauma, I fear, to have been introduced to that chamber of banal plaster horrors at such an impressionable age. It must have been like being shown a room of images of former victims of some ecclesiastical Dracula or Bluebeard cast by a spastic Madame Tussaud. I can't say I ever dreamed of those creepy things down in the basement; and it wasn't their disfigurement that impressed me when I did think of them. As I look back on the episode, it was the unnatural poses of, and the imbecilic expressions on, those stereotyped stalagmites that have remained with me. There is and presumably always has been a serious problem in the creation of a Christian iconography, a problem analogous to that faced by any religion to which images are allowed by the dispensation of its divinities. And it is precisely the problem of analogy: representations of *beati* and *divi* must be somewhat the same as representations of ordinary men and women, yet somehow different. In Christianity this problem can be seen as part of the larger issue allusively sketched out in Tertullian's rhetorical question, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem, the academy with the church . . .?" What have the canons of classical art to say to church artists? Shall Mary look like Aphrodite? John like Apollo? Indeed, what role should human beauty play in the representational art of the Christian dispensation? Is not all earthly beauty a snare to entrap the unwary, a lotus, the eating of which makes the Christian forget his own country, which is God, as Paulinus of Nola suggested?

Fortunately, Paulinus's suggestion has not utterly dominated Christian aesthetics. Disturbed by the Buddhist metaphysics implicit in Paulinus's suggestion, one thinks immediately of Hopkins's poem, "To What Serves Mortal Beauty?" and the more adequate role of beauty in an integrally sacramental order proposed to us there. These lines come to mind, in which the poet, speaking of beauty, says: "See: it does this: keeps warm/Men's wits to the things that are. . . ."

The question concerning which artistic conventions might be most appropriate in ecclesiastical art was eventually hammered out in the Orthodox church after a century of horrible internecine war and persecution, and left the Byzantine world and its derivative national churches (such as the Russian) with that form of ecclesiastical art which we call "icons": two-dimensional, highly stylized yet at times marvelously wrought and strangely individualized images of Christ and the saints. The West, for good or ill, has had no "Iconoclastic Controversy" to match that of the Byzantine Empire in the eighth and ninth centuries. The closest we have come to such a struggle may have been the iconoclasm associated with the Protestant Reformation.

That Protestant iconoclasm, with its destruction of statues, stained-glass windows, paintings, emblems and other ecclesiastical adornments, has surely been of consequence in the history of the art and architecture of Western Christianity. The insistence on simplicity of style in Lutheran, Calvinist, and Baptist churches, for instance, seems to have played a role in driving Roman Catholic church architects and artists into those fits of frenzied extravagance, generally known in the history of art as "Baroque" and "Rococo" styles.

There is much that is elegant, exquisite, and impressive, and at times even things that are endearing if not classically harmonious, in Baroque and Rococo art. And I find myself of two minds concerning the art of these periods. I am generally attracted to its music, but repelled by its graphic and plastic art. Why is this so? Are my ear and eye strangely uncoordinated? Perhaps. I am not sure of the ultimate cause of this discrepancy, but I think I know one of the proximate causes of it. It has to do with perversions of a later period in the history of Western art, the "Romantic Era." Baroque churches and the Baroque spirit seem to have given a natural purchase to romantic graphic and plastic art.

WE VACATION periodically in a small town in the Midwest. Let's call it Springville, and its Catholic church St. Winifred's. (Neither the town nor the church is so named). St. Winifred's is a well-kept and exteriorly handsome red-brick church, somewhere between Basilica, Romanesque, and Gothic styles in design. One end of the church is crammed to overflowing with a marble altar and two side altars, upon and around which rise in Rococo splendor intricately wrought wooden altarpieces. These elaborations rise in niche upon niche, cupola upon cupola, housing various statues and emblems in their grotesque (i.e., grotto-like) sinuosities. Off on a side altar, with no cupola of its own, stands a statue of the Infant Jesus of Prague, its cult not having been foreseen by the architects of St. Winifred's, its regular dressing providing some solace, one presumes, for those who yearn for an ecclesiastical equivalent of Barbie and Ken.

It is indeed the statues in their grottoes which are troubling. They are vintage plaster, from molds that must have been designed at St. Sulpice sometime early in the nineteenth century. There is something eye-catching if not attractive about the Rococo altarpieces. What is utterly distressing is that they house here, as in so many other churches, some of the most

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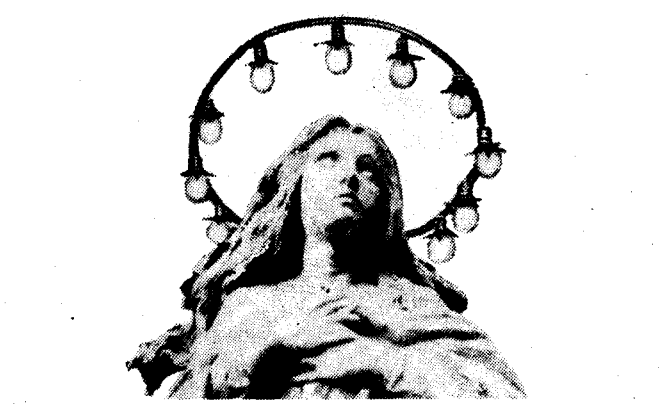
atrocious and abominable statuary ever cast. They are useful for the purposes of this essay because they are so utterly typical of Catholic church art in America over the past century.

The crucified Christ in the center above the altar is flanked by a mourning Mary and a moderately inconsolable John, both in stagy poses dominated by hands clasped in supposed grief, and glances upward at the crucified. The *corpus* is robust, athletic, showing few of the rigors of the crucifixion and its antecedent horrors. In a conventional pose, of which it would be most interesting to learn the origin and channels of transmission, Christ's dead body "hangs" on the cross in what is almost an amusing manner. Instead of knees buckled or splayed and hips straight, as would presumably be the anatomical result of hanging by one's hands with one's feet fixed, the knees are semi-rigid, and there is a highly conventionalized squiggle or off-set position of the hips—vaguely reminiscent of the pose typically taken by an overfed, underworked, and dreadfully bored teen-age girl while waiting for a soft ice-cream cone.

It is part of the purpose of this essay to suggest that what must here be loosely called "romantic" church art works on our aesthetic sensibilities through a seduction to nothingness on a deeply subliminal or subconscious level. On the surface of it, the appeal of such art appears to be trite, or cute, or "sweet," or "pious"—in a sense Aeneas never knew. The squiggle-hipped body of the crucified suggests a certain unreality about the crucifixion. Perhaps a certain gnosticism lurks here? This wasn't really God become man who died here but a semi-divinity, transfixed and transposed in his apparent moment of romantic agony.

More about how that seduction to nothingness works will be suggested as we proceed. At this point it is sufficient to propose that what romanticism does is to try to transform real human suffering into an illusion on the representational (artistic) level so that it can be "enjoyed" in a peculiarly corrupt manner on the mental or spiritual and perhaps eventually even physical level.

That typical representational positioning of Christ's body upon the cross illustrates the worst and most dangerous characteristic of what perhaps ought to be called "romantic church art." To borrow a line from the end of a Brendan Behan play, what romantic crucifixes and pietàs, for instance, seem to be saying is: "O death, where is thy sting-a-ling-a-ling?" The resurrection isn't necessary, for death is just an illusion, a stagy convention, a *trompe l'oeil*. Christ isn't bloody with death; it's all just a play for our therapeutic catharsis. The hip-to-one-side pose of the dead body of Christ seems to be anatomically akin to that pose so teasingly taken by seated women with short skirts who place their hands over their knees. The immediate message conveyed by such a pose is: "Life is so boring. Come, violate me," or "Come, be violated with me"; but, upon reflection: "I don't really mean it. I'm just playing. But the thought is alluring, isn't it? And, anyway, it relieves the boredom."



LEST THIS POINT seem to be over-made, consider the following. Think of that sort of crucifix, or the traditional pietà, à la Michelangelo, with its superficial portrayal of grief and its substantial display of anatomy. Then look sometime at a reproduction of the head of Christ in Hans Holbein's painting, "The Dead Body of Christ in the Tomb," Rather, meditate on it. There is no "romance" here. That Christ is dead. The corpse is laid out on a slab, gray with death. That such was the state of one's God-become-man—rather than that of a jaded "gay" athlete posing for a Palestinian center-fold—is a sobering reflection.

Now there is certainly a real and primary sense in which death and physical injury and mutilation are shameful things; and pornography is literally the writing about shameful things (or the drawing of them, by slight extension of the term). But one way of putting the Christian message is that Christ has taken death captive, and carried bodily decay and disfigurement on high. There is then no shame in death or disfigurement, and no necessary pornography in displaying them representationally. For the first time in the history of human art, perhaps, the portrayal of suffering and death has become possible without the necessary suspicion of perversion. ***But suffering and death have not been physically transformed.*** And those who think they have been may be living a romantic heresy in the bosom of the church. The curse of death, and all that made it appropriately obscene, has been lifted. Death no longer has domination. But, it is still death. It is not to be reveled in or dwelt upon, for that way still lies sado-masochistic prurience or romantic bathos. It must be protrayed as it is, then: dominionless, but still death. The same can be said for pain and suffering.

The irony or paradox in the Christian message, however, ("to the Greeks folly, and to the Jews a stumbling block") requires a kind of integrity and insight in the execution of artistic representations and in their beholding that is rare. In the absence of such integrity and insight, what is produced is likely to be either the work of the incompetent for the unperceptive, or that of the prurient for the prurient.

Gauguin wrote of the annual Paris display of art in the nineteenth century that "the salon [was] an enormous brothel." It served the bourgeoisie as a means of relieving its secular boredom by the viewing of, and thus vicariously partaking in, various forms of imagined sexual seduction, athleticism, and perversion (viz., the innumerable *seraglio* scenes,

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massacres, disasters, etc.). Something similar might be said of much church art.

Consider in this connection the rather plausible argument made by Gustave Flaubert in *Madame Bovary* as to the means by which Emma Bovary became so shockingly corrupt. One source of her corruption seems to have lain in the extravagance of her sentimental education (as opposed to an education of the sentiments, which could be a good thing). On the sly, she drags herself through the bathos and melodrama of numerous romantic novels while at a convent school. Something she has imbibed then allows her to fixate on images such as that of the engorged Sacred Heart, or the sickly lamb, or the pastelled (and presumably perfumed) Jesus: A sort of Hollywood Christ, who of course had his armpits shaved before the crucifixion so as not to give offense to anyone, or detract from the display of his musculature. Emma dotes on the imagery of God as the celestial lover, and tries to mix up promiscuously the emotions she has undergone in sexual ecstasy with those she imagines she should have while taking the Eucharist. Essentially, her sentimental education has left Emma with a cheap imitation of the romantic *streben nach dem unendlichen,* an imitation which puts demands on life which life can never fulfill, while asking of the romantic searcher less than life demands. When life does not satiate her passions, she steps in to help it, turning her lover Leon into her mistress, seducing him instead of him her. Thus her corruption. (Lest the secular and fictional character of this example detract from the argument being made, see Theresa of Avila's account of the same sort of corruption in her own early life. *Autobiography of St. Theresa of Avila* [New York: Columbus Press, 1911], pp. 6-7)

WHAT IS meretricious in romanticism is the allure of the unreal which is set before us, whether it be in writing, in graphic or plastic art, or in music. The unreality of romanticism is not the unreality of sheer fantasy, of course. The problem of romantic unreality arises when *one mistakes the conventions of the genre* in which the representation is cast for reality. The downfall of the romantic lies in confusing the conventional and the real under the influence of a desire to suffer or see suffering done.

The natural erotic impulse which should lead us up with and through nature to a rapt vision and beatific dance about the ever living source of our being is easily displaced along the way. Our love, that is, in a fallen though redeemed world, can come to be attached to or associated with other sources than life. It has of course been argued that, in romantic love, love is in fact the love of death, the erotic desire for annihilation. Here, the "eternal feminine that leads us on" is no Virgin Mother, but a devouring seductrix.

There is a certain sort of church art which might be alluded to here, and might best be described as Transylvanian *kitsch*. This genre is exemplified, I am afraid, by the glass-encased reclining plaster replica of St. Severa under a side altar in the main church on the campus of my university, Notre Dame.

Fortunately for all save Draculian droogs or latter-day *succubi*, I have forgotten the story behind St. Severa's martyrdom. The outstanding result of the martyrdom to the young maiden's physiognomy, however, as displayed in our enshrined representation, was a six-inch long gash in her neck. Oh, the plaster gash oozes no gore; it is a strangely suppurated yet "clean" incision, such as one imagines might be left by a monstrous and infected leech. In fact, in the absence of the explanatory caption attached to the glass case, one would perhaps think that one had here the representation of a young victim of a pyorrheal vampire, or a toothless but tough-gummed werewolf. That or nothing.

The custodians of our church art are becoming aware of the Chamber of Horrors over which they preside, I must report. I have irregularly taken students "on pilgrimage" to the Shrine of St. Severa for purely pedagogical reasons. *Mirabile dictu*, the last time we went, the statue had been clothed in fine garments, with a high collar appropriately covering the gash in her neck!

The desire to suffer or see others suffer for *suffering's sake* may be rather common. Common or not, it is perverse. It is the alliance of the erotic desire for eternal life with the spirit of death and destruction, the mis-identification of fulfillment with annihilation. The entire romantic genre seems to play on this suffering, destructive, nihilistic urge, but it plays on it surreptitiously, subconsciously, sub-liminally, for a straightforward admission of what forces were at work would be intolerable. It does so by establishing conventions, e.g., in the novel or hagiography, in which an impossible but alluring distance is established between human capabilities and human desires. Out of the disproportion between these capabilities and desires arises the allure of the unreal in the only form it can take — existential *angst*, self-imposed love of suffering, love and suffering. Romantic love (and its conventions) means the application of the consciousness of human insufficiency to ascend the ladder of love as an excuse for not moving up it in purposeful pain, and means instead a reveling in purposeless, nihilistic pain. But these are treacherous grounds, for it might be suggested that the Christian message is a romance.

Think of the setting — a ballet — in which Tolstoy places the seduction of naive Natasha by the improbable Anatole in *War and Peace*. Rationality and a proper perception of the dimensions of her situation come and go in Natasha's mind as her desire to experience what she has not known is pandered to by Helene (Anatole's sister), the conventions of the stage, the social, moral, and aesthetic irresponsibility of Russian high society, and, of course, Anatole himself. Or recall Emma Bovary's fingernails gouging into the plush velvet box rail at the Rouen Opera during a performance of, again, a ballet ("Lucia di Lammermoor"), while she silences her husband Charles's question as to why the male lead is torturing his female partner with the hissed exclamation: "Shut up! He's making love to her!"

Music can certainly bear the romantic overburden as well as graphic or plastic art can. Think of the strange, sly amalgam of sexual libido, the desire to suffer, and Catholic liturgical ritual that seems to be characteristic of Wagner's *Parsifal*. Even the performance of a piece of music otherwise "straight" may

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turn it into a romantic slough: Think of various performances you may have heard of Bach's "St. Matthew's Passion." The "romantic" performances, in addition presumably to changing Bach's instrumentation and orchestration, seem to tend to allow the performers to dwell on phrases such as the last words of Christ, so that "I thirst" and "It is consummated" sound as much like the utterance of someone in the throes of sheer (though stagy) sexual passion as they do like the utterances of a dying man. This appears to be the ambiguity which characterized Emma Bovary's bogus spirituality.

The didactic purposes to which ecclesiastical or hagiographical art is to be put present peculiar problems, of course. St. Gerard Majella will never look like the member of any grammar school or high school football team, and thus holy cards of him and others of his ilk (that is, those engaged in conspicuous consumption, or dying of tuberculosis in public) ought not ever have been distributed to pubescent boys as incentives to purity. Lily-bearing St. Josephs, who look less likely to have handled a saw than Oscar Wilde did, ought not to have added the pallor of their vintage plaster to our churches.

WHAT IS to be done? A basic response would be, Try to understand and observe the spirit of pronouncements concerning sacred art such as those in the Code of Canon Law (i.e., Nos. 485, 1161, 1162, 1164, 1178, 1261, 1268, 1269 #1, 1279, 1280, 1385, 1399), and in supplemental elocutions such as the Holy Office's June 30, 1952, "Instruction on Sacred Art" (*AAS*, 44-542). The latter, for instance, citing Canon 1279, reminds us that "the Ordinaries should see to it that whatever is in any way contrary to the holiness of the place and the reverence due to the house of God be removed from sacred buildings; and they should strictly forbid that a hoard of statues and images of little worth, mostly of a stereotyped form, be inanely and awkwardly presented for the veneration of the faithful on the altars themselves or against the adjoining walls of the chapel." Again, as the same instruction insists, we should see to it that those preparing for holy orders receive adequate instruction in sacred art, and that diocesan commissions for sacred art are composed of those who are "competent in the field of art but also firm in their allegiance to the Christian faith. . . ."

But this would be only a beginning. Legalism or a legalistic approach might only compound the problem as we see it, for it necessarily emphasizes the letter, and not the spirit. The law is written to prevent the worst, not to encourage the best. In our church art, Christ may reign from the cross as the Byzantine Pantocrator, or he may hang in agony on it, or he may be presented to us in numerous other appropriate forms. The law cannot discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate. Those who administer it can. It is their hearts and souls which must be moved, so that they may faithfully, gracefully and appropriately enforce those general provisions of the law, such as those of canon 1279 (#3), which specify that "The Ordinary shall never permit, in churches or other sacred places, the exposition of images [paintings, statues, pictures, medals] which convey false dogmatic notions, which do not conform to good taste or the canons of propriety, or which may be an occasion of dangerous error for the unlearned."

THE PROBLEM of what good church art consists in is obviously a very serious one, one not to be settled in articles of this sort, one filled with the most substantial consequences for the liturgical life of the church and the spiritual life of individuals. As is so often the case in such issues, it is much easier to specify what good church art is not, than to write prescriptions for what it should be. Ideally, I suppose, it should be the precipitate of a deeply lived Christian life, produced by the mind and hands of a skilled craftsman. Good church art requires the use of the imagination disciplined by meditation on the "good news" if it is to produce appropriate images of the Word made flesh and of the sacramental order his Spirit informs.

Iconography in a sacramental and incarnational order is of immense importance. If our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and if Christ, being God, did not hesitate to take on our flesh and take that flesh to and through its cyclic return to dust, then we owe more attention to our church art than we have been willing to pay. In the absence of such willingness we might appear to be better off moving toward the iconoclasm God enjoined on the Jews, and which the Muslims later adopted.

But this would be a mistake. It is not pleasant to think of the Christian mind running through the endless ruts of whatever sort of contemporary variations on arabesques we might produce. Filagree work betrays the pedigree of sons and daughters of God. He who made us in his image and likeness and loved what he had made so much that he dwelt among us, could hardly ask that we avoid representational art. What he can demand is that we pour our whole Christian soul into its production, and not produce it and use it as an exercise in *ersatz* eroticism or worse.

It is hard to know what to recommend to harried pastors and all those devoted religious and lay people who have genuine concerns in the area of church or liturgical art. In general, amateurism might be suggested. "Let a hundred flowers bloom." That way we might produce from the roots of the Christian experience a few Holbeins and El Grecos. But the cost of such amateurism, that is, the regular employment of local artists, might be exorbitant. There is a mural of the Last Supper behind the altar of our parish church which looks for all the world like a portrayal of "Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs." I am told a local artist perpetrated it.

Perhaps the best that can be hoped for is that we will all slowly and carefully and prayerfully work through the function of mortal beauty in the divine economy, and in doing so come to a more adequate appreciation of the role of church art in general, and of the human image in worship in particular. To continue with the argument of Hopkins's poem, "To What Serves Mortal Beauty,":

To man, that needs would worship block or barren stone,
Our love says: Love what are love's worthiest, were all known;

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World's loveliest — men's selves. Self flashes off frame and face.

"Self flashes off frame and face." In an age when men would seem to worship banners as well as "block or barren stone," we need to remember that.

Everything in the church building ought to help lead us to worship most fully. Yet statuary and graphic art are not at the center of the liturgical functions, and perhaps for a while they ought to remain literally peripheral, until we are graced by artists who can, through their good work, lead us to a re-appropriation of the deepest roots of our iconographic heritage. Good art is not something one can get by simply demanding it.

Few would propose Holbein's style as a model for today, or his "Dead Christ" as a paradigm for church art. That starkness would perhaps be unbearable. It was not my purpose in mentioning this piece to establish it as a canon, but simply to suggest that here was a work of art in which the artist had taken at least one primal reality of Christianity seriously. What is revolting about so much representative church art since the seventeenth century is that it is romantic; that is, it is stagy, posed, imitating the emotions conventionally but authoritatively described in the novel (= "roman," the root of "romantic") rather than gleaned from the nature of the Christian experience.

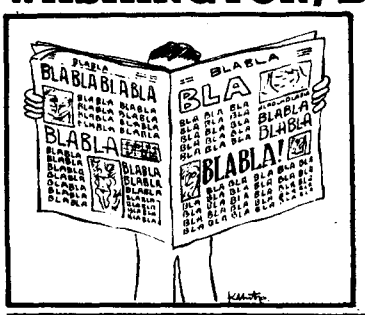
Goethe called his autobiography *Poetry and Truth*. He had taken the truth of his life, much of it caustic, and turned it into poetry. Among his readers he noted that some had taken his "poetry" (e.g., *The Sorrows of the Young Werther* and its romantic-suicidal hero) and turned it into the truth of their lives. That was perverse. It was not living, not the self-motivated action of the free man who has his principles within his own breast. It was rather the slavish imitation of authoritative literary convention on the part of those who were without much experience of life and who perhaps could not even conceive of what living meant in the absence of some external authority to tell them how to live.

It often seems that such art as this essay addresses has its tap root not in the fertile soil of experience but in the sterile surrogate medium of authority, artistic and ecclesiastical. Though experience teaches lessons which are at times too dear, an art based primarily on authority can be immensely corrupting. It seems as if, to paraphrase a familiar sentiment of Acton's, "Authority tends to corrupt, and absolute authority corrupts absolutely."

Let us turn the truth of our lives into the poetry of our art, and not borrow our truth from artistic conventions or ecclesiastical tradition, no matter how imposing the authority of such convention or tradition may be in its origin or expression.

We must have and be the experience of the truth of our belief before we can turn it into genuine "poetry" — or painting, or sculpture. If we proceed in the opposite direction, moving from what the authority of code or convention tells us is genuine poetry or painting or sculpture, we shall produce in all probability only corrupt belief — and, incidentally, poor poetry, or art.

WASHINGTON, BELGRADE, & THE U.S. PRESS SEE EYE TO EYE



Yugoslavia through official lenses

MATTHEW M. MESTROVIC

AMERICAN PRESS coverage of Yugoslavia's grave current economic and political crisis gives me a feeling of *déjà* vu. There's a tendency on the part of journalists to view developments from the official points of view of Washington and Belgrade, all the more so since these views coincide. The underlying objective of press reporting seems to be to support American foreign policy objectives vis-à-vis Yugoslavia which were clearly summed up in June, 1980, by President Jimmy Carter. America, he said, strongly supports "the independence, territorial integrity, and unity of Yugoslavia. The U.S. wishes to see an economically prosperous and politically strong Yugoslavia."

Problems arise, of course, when objective reality starts to clash with Washington policies which American journalists, for a variety of often valid reasons, in turn seek to support, as occurred for instance during the ultimately disastrous Vietnam war, and more recently in the case of Iran.

Fifteen years ago, when the Vietnam war was at its height, such a dilemma confronted *Time* magazine, where I was working as a contributing editor. Correspondents in Vietnam had begun sending reports that the fighting was going badly for our side, which ran counter to both Washington determination to win the war and Managing Editor Otto Fuerbringer's deep feelings of patriotic pride. The office rumor mill had it that

(Continued on page 179)

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THE HUMAN FAMILY UNDERSTANDING OTHER PEOPLE

(formerly Books for Brotherhood)

Children's and Young Adults' List

EACH YEAR a representative committee draws up a list of books for children and young adults, books that best portray relationships among people of different origins, races, and religions. The complete list, selected from books published from August 1981 through July 1982, is meant to cover a wide range of ages, interests, and readability. The following selection from the complete list is presented by the publishers named below.

Ah, But Your Land Is Beautiful, *by Alan Paton, author of Cry, the Beloved Country. Scribner's, 1982. $12.95*
This stirring novel of South Africa from 1952 to 1958 tells of courageous men and women who defy the laws of segregation and apartheid to protest their injustices. Among the characters in this racially divided society are Indians, Africans, Afrikaners and English-speaking people. (14 and up)

All the Colors of the Race, *by Arnold Adoff. Illustrated by John Steptoe. Lothrop, 1982. $9.50*
A beautiful and deceptively simple chain of poems in which a young person celebrates her mixed heritage, seeing herself as a symbol of the whole human race. Richly illustrated in brown and white. (6-11)

Apple Is My Sign, *by Mary Riskin. Houghton Mifflin, 1981. $7.95*
Ten-year-old-Harry, deaf since birth, leaves the safety of his family and small town for a new life in the big city, at a school for the deaf. Surrounded by other deaf children, yet learning to function in the hearing world, Harry is scared, excited and challenged by the promise of the future. Taking place at the turn of the century, this is a touching, realistic, and at times humorous, look at what it's like to be deaf. (10-12)

The Battle Horse, *by Harry Kullman. Translated from the Swedish By George Blecher and Lone Thygesen-Belcher. Bradbury, 1981. $8.95*
In this stinging allegory, a Stockholm neighborhood on the eve of World War II is swept by an Ivanhoe-inspired craze: mock jousts fought by preppie "knights" mounted on the backs of working-class "battle horses." (11 and up)

Chariots of Fire, *by W.J. Weatherby. Dell (paperback) 1982. $2.75*
Based on the award-winning film, this true story is an exciting recreation of the challenge of two runners in the 1924 Olympics. One is Jewish and runs to fight bigotry; the other, a Scottish missionary, runs to glorify God. (12 and up)

Chernowitz, *by Fran Arrick. Bradbury, 1981. $8.95*
Perhaps there are other reasons, but it is mostly because he is Jewish that Bobby Cherno becomes the target of Emmet Sundback's campaign of torment. Bobby suffers privately all through his first year at Middleboro High School but when his parents too become victims he carefully plots his revenge. The revenge works. Or does it? There are no pat answers in this all-too-real story. (11-14)

Coming to America; Immigrants from Southern Europe, *by Gladys Nadler Rips. Delacorte, 1982. $9.95*
Here are Italian, Greek, Portuguese, and Spanish immigrants to America from the late 19th century to the present. Through their actual experiences, we learn why they left, how they found work, fought prejudices and became "Americanized" while retaining their traditions. (12-16)

Exit Visa, *by Paul Panish. Coward, McCann, 1981. $14.95*
The dramatic stories of several Soviet Jewish families and their emigration to the United States. Their struggles begin with the decision to leave the USSR and continue through their arrival, and at times difficult adjustment to life in the U.S. Based on extensive interviews, this is a compassionate, compelling testament to these new Americans. (14 and up)

The Forgotten Men, *by Jesus Torbado and Manuel Leguineche. Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1981. $14.95*
These are personal narratives of fugitives, living casualties of the Civil War in Spain, who remained in hiding during the Franco regime, many of them for as long as 25 to 30 years, in justifiable fear of being arrested and executed. Told in the words of the men and their long-suffering families, the stories attest not only to the horror of that war and its aftermath but to the courage, goodness, and endurance of which people are capable. (14 and up)

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God and Government: the Separation of Church and State, *by Ann E. Weiss. Houghton Mifflin, 1982. $8.95*
Probing the limits of religious tolerance, Weiss, a supporter of strict church-state separation, demonstrates that throughout American history the spheres of God and Government have dangerously overlapped. (11 and up)

The Hispanic Americans, *by Milton Meltzer. Photographs by Morrie Camhi and Catherine Noren. Crowell, 1982. $11.50*
A very readable account of America's fastest-growing minority, concentrating mainly on three major groups—Mexican, Cuban and Puerto Rican. Historical sketches filling in the cultural background of each group are interspersed with vivid personal accounts of families and individuals facing such current controversial issues as bilingual education, illegal immigration and discrimination. (11-14)

Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez, an Autobiography, *by Richard Rodriguez. Godine, 1982. $13.95*
The autobiography of this American scholarship winner, the son of working-class Mexican immigrant parents, tells of an educational journey which led to his own intellectual distinction but sadly left behind the humble life of his parents and relatives. (14 and up)

If I Had a Paka: Poems in Eleven Languages, *by Charlotte Pomerantz. Ill. by Nancy Tafuri, Greenwillow, 1982. $9.50.*
Spicing the twelve poems in this picture-book collection is a smattering of words in eleven languages, from the Swahili "If I Had a Paka" to Yiddish lullaby ("Shlof, sleep through the night./You will wake big and strong./For your grandma, dein buffa, is right./Except when dein bubba is wrong."). (5-7)

Kimako's Story, *by June Jordan. Illustrated by Kay Burford. Houghton Mifflin, 1981. $6.95*
One whole week was plenty of time for Kimako to explore the streets around her building. All this was possible because she had a bodyguard in the form of a big old Airedale. An understated bit of poetic prose describes a ghetto child's adventure. (7-10)

Last Waltz in Vienna, *by George Clare. Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1982. $16.50*
A poignant look at a Jewish family's hundred-year history in Vienna . . . years that abruptly ended with the German annexatin of Austria and the second World War. Clare details the growth and then destruction of his family, one of the countless such tragedies of the Holocaust years. (14 and up)

The Night Journey, *by Kathryn Lasky. Illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman. Warne, 1981. $8.95*
Time and generations do not move in a straight line, but often make a circle, in this special, beautifully told story of two generations. Nana Sashie and Rachel have secret meetings in which the old woman shares her memories of an escape from Russia in the late 1800s, as Rachel tells her everyday experiences in school and elsewhere. (10-14)

Paula K. Lazrus Library of Intergroup Relations Selected by
Edith G. Selig, Supervisor
Joseph Benkovitz, Librarian, Springfield Gardens High School
Lillian Morrison, Young Adult Materials Consultant, former Coordinator of Young Adult Services, NY Public Library
Pamela D. Pollack, Senior Editor, Morrow Junior Books
R. Bryan Roberts, Coordinator, Programs and Services Department, Queens Borough Public Library
Barbara Rollock, Coordinator of Children's Services, The New York Public Library
Roslyn Rubinstein, Head, Young Adult Division, Central Library, Queens Borough Public Library

The Original Colored House of David, *by Martin Quigley. Houghton Mifflin, 1981., $8.95*
Billed as "Speedy Deefy, an albino black deaf-mute," Timmy Nelson, a 17-year-old white boy, joins the itinerant all black, all bearded Original Colored House of David baseball team. There is plenty of humor and fun as Timmy travels with the team through Minnesota and North Dakota picking up many tricks of the barnstorming baseball trade, all the while learning to view his familiar white world of the 1920s through the eyes of a black man. (14 and up)

A Picture Book of Jewish Holidays, *by David A. Adler. Holiday House, 1981. $8.95*
The holidays and holy days of the Jewish year are lyrically explained. The simple text is highlighted by striking illustrations showing a modern Jewish family in celebration. This picture book will appeal to all ages. (4-7)

The Rabbi's Girls, *by Johanna Hurwitz. Illustrated by Pamela Johnson. Morrow, 1982. $8.50*
A small town in Ohio in 1923 became just one of the homes eleven-year-old Carrie had lived in. Disarmingly simple in plot Hurwitz's book lovingly details Jewish life and the warmth of a close-knit family made strong by their faith. (8-11)

Red Earth, Blue Sky, *by Margaret Rau. Crowell/Har-Row, 1981. $8.95*
Traveling through the vast Australian interior known as the Outback, we meet the aborigines who have been there for thousands of years along with the more recent white and Asian immigrants; both trying to adjust to this harsh and beautiful land—and to each other. (10-12)

The Refugee Summer, *by Edward Fenton. Delacorte, 1982. $10.95*
Together for the summer of 1922 in a sleepy Athens suburb, five children of different ethnic and economic backgrounds

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dedicate themselves to performing brave deeds; their dreams are given meaning by the real-life crisis of a brother and sister, victims of the Greco-Turkish war. (11-14)

Righteous Gentile, *by John Bierman. Viking, 1981. $12.95*
One of the silent heros of World War II, Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat, helped secure passports for thousands of Hungarian Jews, thus saving them from Nazi persecution. An inspiring story of an ordinary man who became extraordinary in the most difficult of circumstances. (14 and up)

The Seeing Summer, *by Jeannette Eyerly. Lippincott/ Harper, 1981. $8.89*
In this sensitive young reader, a child discovers that her neighbor's blindness is not the handicap she had perceived. In fact, Jenny doesn't feel limited by her blindness. Adventures, including a kidnapping for ransom, enliven ten-year-old Carey's association with Jenny. (8-10)

Somebody Else's Kids, *by Torey L. Hayden. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1981. $11.95*
The author recounts her day-to-day experiences as she teaches and copes with a class of four severely disturbed children of varying age and background. The children come alive for us as individuals as they struggle with their differentness and learn to help each other. There are tragedies and setbacks always eventually outweighted by the moments of learning, of fun, and of mutual caring. And through it all shines Ms. Hayden's dedication to her work and love for this kind of child. (14 up)

A Spirit to Ride the Whirlwind, *by Athena V. Lord. Macmillan, 1981. $10.95*
In her first novel for young people, this author has chosen the historical setting of Lowell, Massachusetts and the purposeful theme of working conditions for women in that mill town of the 1830s. Vivid details about the lives of the mill workers and the general economic climate of the time and place are well described. The novel breaks fresh ground, as it sets the scene for Binnie, a feisty heroine, in a picture of one year in her life when she starts to work in the mill and becomes involved in a strike. (11-14)

Stolen Years, *by Sara Zyskind. Lerner, 1981. $11.95*
Sara was eleven years old when she was sent to a Nazi concentration camp in her home, Poland. Her experiences form a harrowing story of suffering, struggle and survival in a childhood that was indeed "stolen" from her. (14 and up)

Story for a Black Night, *by Clayton Bess. Parnassus/ Houghton, 1982. $7.95*
The "Good Samaritan" in this modern parable, powerfully told in dialect, is an African mother who risks her life to tend an abandoned baby stricken with smallpox. (10-13)

Streets of Gold, *by Karen Branson. Putnam, 1981., $9.95*
Fourteen-year-old Maureen O'Connor, her two brothers, Brian and Paddy, and her Da survive a stormy voyage to New York from their beloved Ireland during the potato famine. The O'Connors' story portrays the struggle of the Irish against poverty and prejudice in America. It is ultimately an optimistic story as their lives are touched by the Rothmans who arrange for Brian's education, the Duffys who work with the Underground Railroad, and Edward, the young English sailor who loves Maureen. It is also an honest story that does not evade the reverse bigotry practiced by Paddy or the strong-arm tactics of politician Brendan Dooley. (11-14)

Tortillitas para Mama and Other Nursery Rhymes, *selected and translated by Margot C. Griego and others. Illustrated by Barbara Cooney. Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1981. $9.95*
An attractive bilingual picture book containing 13 Latin American nursery rhymes familiar to most children of Hispanic background. The rhymes in Spanish and English are accompanied by full-color, often full-page illustrations. Most of the verses, e.g., finger rhymes, tickling rhymes, etc., require motions or actions which are described in the text. (3-6)

They Triumphed Over Their Handicaps, *by Joan Harries. Franklin Watts, 1981. $8.40*
From Ray Charles and Ted Kennedy, Jr. to lesser known Kitty O'Neill and Jay J. Armes, we are simply and affectingly told about each person's physical disability and how she/he did not allow it to "handicap" her/his life. (11-14)

Uncommon Women, *by Joan Kufrin; photographs by George Kufrin. New Century, 1981. $12.95*
A collection of interviews with nine extrordinarily gifted and successful women in the arts; dancer, Maria Tallchief; flutist, Eugenie Zukerman; poet, Gwendolyn Brooks; opera singer, Roberta Peters; novelist, Mary McCarthy; conductor, Sarah Caldwell; actress, Julie Harris; painter, Alice Neel; and jazz pianist and composer, Mary Lou Williams. The interviews are personal, lively, informal, and inspiring. Excellent photographs help us to visualize the personalities. (14 and up)

Upon the Head of the Goat: a Childhood in Hungary 1939-1944, *by Aranka Siegal, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1981. $9.95*
The author of this deeply felt memoir—dedicated "to those who did not survive" the Holocaust—grew up in a close-knit Jewish household doomed by the Nazi occupation of Hungary. (11 and up)

The Wave, *by Morton Rhue. Dell (paperback), 1981. $1.95. Delacorte (hardcover) 1981. $10.95*
What begins as a high school history class exercise in power and the rise of the Nazi Party becomes a dangerous movement when the entire student body of a California school is pressured into joining the "Wave" . . . or else. This novelization of a true incident chillingly demonstrates how individuals can lose themselves and their freedom to pressure groups. (12-14)

For the complete "Human Family" book list write to:
The National Conference of Christians and Jews, 43 W. 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10019

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Fuerbringer was constantly on the phone with President Lyndon Johnson discussing the war, and was presumably influenced by the president's assurances that all was well. Consequently, the negative reports of the correspondents were thrown away, and the stories rewritten in the office to say that U.S. forces were winning the war.

In the same way, in the late 1970s, during the twilight of the Shah's regime, many Iranian students on government scholarships were studying at Fairleigh Dickinson University, where I moved to after leaving *Time*. What the students were saying about Iran sharply contrasted with stories published in the American press. The students told of SAVAK tortures and killings, of the desperate poverty of the Iranian masses amidst the oil wealth, and the growing opposition to both the Shah and America. But little, if anything, of this reached the pages of American newspapers at that point. On the whole, the American reader was told of quite a different Iran: militarily strong, increasingly prosperous and Westernized, under the firm and enlightened rule of the Pahlevi Shah.

Now I have the same feeling concerning the coverage of Yugoslav developments since the death, in 1980, of President Tito. True, the *New York Times* and, to a lesser extent, the *Christian Science Monitor* have written quite extensively about Yugoslavia's mounting economic difficulties: the 15 percent unemployment, the 40 percent annual inflation, the staggering burden of foreign indebtedness the true amount of which nobody seems to know for sure (it may stand as high as $28 billion). American papers have reported about the gasoline rationing, the widespread electrical blackouts that leave whole sections of cities in the dark for hours at a time, the shortages of detergents, coffee, and even medical supplies.

But on balance, the stories are generally upbeat. Belgrade officials are the main source of information: they concede that the country is facing problems because "of past mistakes," but assure that the government has the situation well in hand and has put in place a "stabilization program" which will improve the situation in a reasonable period of time—three to four years, according to *NIN*, Belgrade's most widely read weekly.

Since the death of Tito, Yugoslavia no longer seems to exist so far as the *Washington Post* is concerned, as if the only significant thing about the country was that Tito happened to be its ruler. The *Wall Street Journal* in recent months has repeatedly attacked the State Department for trying to mislead private bankers into extending further credits to a financially strapped, and practically bankrupt government. But there does not seem any desire or capacity on the part of American newspapers to discuss the underlying causes of the economic collapse: the bankruptcy of the Yugoslav economic and political system of alleged "worker self-management of enterprises" and one-party Communist political monopoly.

THE AMERICAN press, particularly the *New York Times*, has over the past two years reported almost reluctantly on the revolt of Yugoslavia's ethnic Albanian minority. On the whole, *Times* correspondents accept as accurate Belgrade's official version of the widespread and continuing unrest in the Albanian-inhabited parts of Yugoslavia, which started in March of 1981, and is still going on two years later.

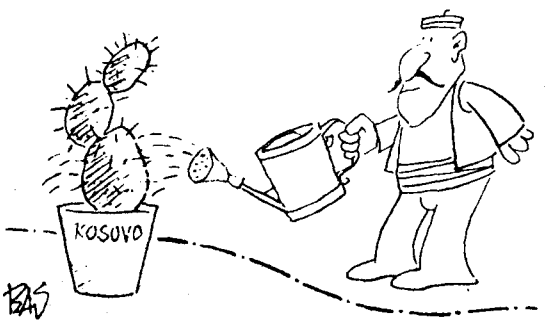
The *New York Times* keeps repeating in just about every one of its stories that "nine people were killed" in the Albanian disturbances, as the Belgrade government has sought to win support against the Albanian "secessionists" and "counter-revolutionaries" by rallying Serbian nationalism. The Belgrade press, notably the daily *Politika* and the weekly *NIN*, have carried stories of alleged atrocities perpetrated by Albanian nationalists against the Serbian minority inhabiting the predominately Albanian Kosovo region.

Last fall, the *New York Times*'s David Binder wrote several articles echoing Belgrade's views. In a story published on November 28th, Binder spoke of "weekly incidents of rape, arson, pillage, and industrial violence most seemingly designed to drive Kosovo's remaining indigenous Slavs—Serbs and Montenegrins—out of the province" of Kosovo. Binder saw the conflict as pitting Yugoslavia's 1.5 million Albanian minority against the country's overwhelming Slavic majority.

But the West European press, particularly the German and Austrian papers, have quite a different story to tell. And so, too, has *Zeri i popullit*, the official organ of the Communist party, of neighboring Albania. For instance, Heiko Flottau, wrote in the *Suddeutsche Zeitung* that the situation in Kosovo was so serious, and the unrest so widespread, that Belgrade had to rush a quarter of Yugoslavia's army to Kosovo and western Macedonia. This has been confirmed by Viktor Meier of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. In a major policy speech on November 10, Albania's Stalinist dictator Enver Hoxha said that 60,000 Yugoslav soldiers were garrisoning Kosovo.

As far as the number of dead, wounded, and jailed are concerned, European papers give figures several hundred times larger than those reported in America. The West German journalist Wolfgang Pabst, writing in *Neue Bildpost*, interviewed "members of the Albanian resistance in Kosovo" who told him that from March, 1981, "2,600 people were killed, 3,000 wounded and 4,000 to 5,000 arrested." A recently published study by London's prestigious Institute for the Study of Conflict stated that official Yugoslav figures "released by the end of March 1982" show that "at least 2,000 persons were apprehended by the police, over 1,600 received prison sentences, more than 400 of these between one and fifteen years."

The *New York Times*, again accepting official Yugoslav



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views, speaks of "1.5 million ethnic Albanians in Yugoslavia" who are in conflict with the country's overwhelming Slavic majority. But Albanian nationalist exiles in the West insist that there are 2.5 million Albanians in Yugoslavia, and so does the government in Tirana. Enver Hoxha has warned the "greater Serbian chauvinists" that the patience of Albania is coming to an end and that "the Albanians are not a state of three million but a nation of six million," clearly implying that several million of his compatriots live in Yugoslavia. Of course, the growing dispute between Belgrade and Tirana over the Kosovo issue gives the entire problem another, very dangerous, international dimension.

AS FAR AS the basic conflict is concerned, it is not between the minority Albanians and the majority Slavs, as David Binder says, but between the Albanians and the Serbs, as Carl G.Strohm emphasized in Vienna's *Die Welt* of August 27th. True, most of Yugoslavia's people are Slavic-speaking, but they do not constitute a single political and national entity, but a number of often mutually hostile peoples, such as the Croats and the Serbs. The Croats as a rule regard the Albanians, and not the Serbs, as allies.

As far as the alleged Albanian atrocities against the Serbs are concerned, Strohm believes that they are greatly exaggerated by Belgrade to justify a purge of Albanian officials and security forces in Kosovo, and place the region under firm Serbian control, as was the case before 1966.

Both Belgrade and the *Times* were extremely surprised by the "violence of the outbreak in Kosovo." But Strohm, writing in *Die Welt* of October 18, insists that though the "post-Tito regime was totally unprepared for the explosion of nationalism in Kosovo," even uninformed foreign tourists traveling through the region were aware that a "confrontation was brewing between the Serbs and Albanians." And as London's Institute for the Study of Conflict points out, there were major outbreaks of violence in Kosovo in 1968, 1974, and 1979, though none as massive or lasting as the current unrest.

The Albanian problem facing Yugoslavia, which cannot be resolved within the framework of that state, dates from 1912, when about 40 percent of the Albanians, inhabiting a nationally-compact area, were included without their consent into Serbia, and after 1918, into Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia.

The general Washington response to Yugoslavia's mounting problems has not been to advise basic reforms and solutions, but to proffer more money. Thus early in December Secretary of State George Shultz tried to persuade our European allies to join the U.S. in granting Yugoslavia an additional $1 billion credit. Facing European reluctance, the State Department has let it be known that the U.S. would put up the money by itself, if the Europeans did not go along.

How serious the Yugoslav situation may actually be was revealed in the concluding sentence of an article in the financial section of the *New York Times* of December 8: "Secretary of State George P. Shultz is understood to feel that help for Yugoslavia is urgently needed to prevent a possible economic and political collapse of that country." This is the first time, to my knowledge, that a top administration official has spoken so frankly about the actual state of affairs.

In the case of Iran, it was only as the Shah's regime was in full dissolution that Washington began thinking of alternatives. Former Undersecretary of State George Ball was charged with the task of formulating a new policy, but since by that point events in Iran were moving fast, as they often do when revolution starts, Ball asked the experts he was hurriedly consulting to limit their comments to at most two double-spaced typed pages. By then, of course, the whole thing was in any case an exercise in futility. Let's hope the same thing will not be true in the case of Yugoslavia.

Stage

WHAT'S A FRIEND FOR?

GOING TO 'EXTREMITIES'

WILLIAM MASTROSIMONE'S *Extremities* begins with an attempted rape in which the intended victim, a can of bug spray happily at hand, turns the tables on her tormentor. At the first blackout (scene break), the man is blinded and the woman is strangling him with the wire of the telephone he earlier pulled out of the wall. The audience with which I saw the play went wild with approval. There are a variety of ways of reading that unstinting applause. The audience may have wanted to show its admiration for Susan Sarandon and James Russo, whose performances were graphically convincing. It may have been yelling for a rescue as children did when I was a boy whenever the cavalry rode in to save the beleaguered wagon train. I think that the response was as much visceral as theatrical, that the audience, full of people who had been mugged if not raped or whose close friends had so suffered, was signaling their desire if not their ability to fight back.

The opening scene and the response to it allowed the play to get off to a rousing start, to carry the audience through the long stretch of verbal fencing between Marjorie and the man whom she has imprisoned in the fireplace. As though uncertain that the play can sustain the necessary tension, the director, Robert Allan Ackerman, has bridged the break between the early scenes with a grating, nervous, aggressive sound effect (Scott Lehrer is credited with the sound design) which is apparently intended to keep the audience on edge and on the edge of its seat. The highly effective theatricality of the production, like that of *Agnes of God*, somewhat confuses what I take to be the more serious concerns of the script.

Raul is a despicable man, a rapist and murderer, who preys on the helpless. In a confession scene at the end of the play, he and the playwright suggest that he is helpless himself, a prey of

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his compulsion, but this psychological sentimentality is not portrayed through most of the play. The man we see is cruel and dangerous, but he is also inventive, manipulative, a bad but dedicated liar with a taste for ethical and therapeutic clichés and a twisted talent for comic lines. He has a way of besting Marjorie, forcing her to respond with an act or a threat of violence. At the beginning of the play we have seen Marjorie react to a wasp bite by first killing the insect and then burning it with her cigarette. For most of the play, we watch her behaving in a way that makes her seem more malevolent than her prisoner. I think that Mastrosimone wants to make a point, as David Mamet did in *Edmond*, about the way the extremities of contemporary life bring to the surface the violence and anger that were once held under by what used to be called civilizing forces.

The character of Raul, however well conceived, is essentially a device, an occasion for Marjorie to reveal herself and, more important, to show her in concert and in conflict with the two women with whom she shares the house. Patricia is presumably a professional of some kind (she carries a briefcase) — a teacher, a social worker, a personnel director. She is the parodied voice of reason and liberal understanding, a comic figure in a non-comic situation, quite certain that the problem of Raul can be taken care of by orderly discussion. Terry, once a rape victim, would prefer to hide, to separate herself from what is going on; she is essentially cheerful, very uncertain, given to oblique bursts of rebellion against the dominance of both Marjorie and Patricia. Raul uses one woman against another, eliciting sympathy from Terry and Patricia, casting himself as the innocent victim of the vicious Marjorie. The audience, having witnessed the opening scene, knows that Marjorie's view of the rapist is a correct one, but the other two characters, who can see only an implacably murderous Marjorie and a blinded, trussed-up, wheedling man, come to doubt their roommate. The irony of their responses, the implicit comment on our tendency to judge people and situations from the self-assurance of inadequate information, has a particularly ugly overtone here. What surfaces is the distrust, the dislike, the envy that the two other women feel for Marjorie; they respond in ways that are usually considered stereotypically male, assuming that Marjorie's habitual manner is an invitation to rape. The disintegration of this group of women is the best thing about Mastrosimone's play. Effective not simply as the dramatic presentation of three specific women, it suggests the precariousness of any relationship in which the shared sympathy and congeniality (which exists here too) is tested by a disorienting crisis.

The ending of *Extremities* is an ambiguous and, I think, a weak one. I had read Mastrosimone's script a few years ago, and one of my fellow playgoers, caught up in the drama, said at intermission, "Oh, you know how it comes out." I suddenly realized that I knew no such thing, that I had forgotten the ending. The reason is that there is no way, short of cataclysm, to bring this play to a close. Mastrosimone's is more of a way out than an inevitable finish. Raul, having been forced into a confession by the knife-wielding Marjorie, is left alone with her while the other two women go for the police. He asks if he can return to the fireplace, crawls blindly to his cage which is now his sanctuary and curls up in the fetal position, singing crazily to himself. Marjorie sits beside the fireplace, discards her weapons and begins to cry. Who are the tears for? The unfortunate Raul? Herself and the creature she has become? The empathetic audience, fellow inhabitants of a world gone awry? All of these? Described this way the final image may seem to be a rich and elusive one, but to me it looked like a trick, a too neat solution to a difficult problem, stage gesture as a substitute for emotional and artistic force. I found myself thinking back to other moments in which the playwright or the director was too intrusive, upstaging the seriousness of the play. That is unfortunate, for *Extremities* is more than a flashily staged, very well-acted evening of theater. Mastrosimone and his characters have some scary things to say about friends and enemies and the uneasy line between them.

GERALD WEALES

Screen

NO CAUSE FOR ALARM

THE HUMOR OF BILL FORSYTH

PART WAY through Bill Forsyth's *Local Hero*, there's a scene that opens with a half dozen Scottish fishermen standing along a railing by the beach. Like the coastal village where the film is set, these men are so picturesque that they might be posed for a postcard, except that at the end of the line, also lounging against the rail, is a girl. She's in punk gear with a rooster comb of spiky hair dyed various metallic colors and, for make-up, a lightning bolt painted on her face. The scene is already funny, just from the visual with which it begins. It works well enough as a tableau not to need to function as a scene. Nor does it really try to be much of a scene. A young Texan named Mac (Peter Reigert), who's there to buy the entire village as a site for an oil refinery, strolls by and makes polite conversation. Noticing a baby in a pusher by the girl, he asks brightly whose it is. No one says anything. All the men get sour expressions and look away. End of scene.

It's hard to tell just what the look on the men's faces means. Is it that they are too prudish and old-fashioned to discuss such things with a stranger? Or perhaps one of them is the father, but it's uncertain which one. That there has been some hanky-panky between these quaint old fishermen and this Mod, surly girl is a possibility hanging heavily in the air as the scene ends. Peculiar intercourse between generations, cultures or races, to say nothing of sexes, is a rather frequent occurrence in Forsyth's films. In his previous effort, *Gregory's Girl*, the young hero's relationship with his parents, teachers, and sister is very odd, but not half as odd as his relationship with girls his own age. The impossible, incompatible mix of people in *Local*

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Hero includes, besides the teenager and the fishermen, a congregation of rural Scots with a black minister, a psychiatrist with a Texas oil millionaire named Happer (Burt Lancaster) for a patient, and a respectable middle-aged woman from the fishing village who's having an affair of long standing with the captain of a Russian trawler.

The modern world is invading the ancient village in *Local Hero* on all sides. The Russian trawler is in their harbor, Texans want to tear down their houses to build a pipeline, and their kids dress up like Martians. What makes Forsyth's film both novel and funny is that he sees little cause for alarm in all this. He himself has no capacity for alienation, nor does he endow his characters with any. To him the modern mismatch of values, attitudes, and styles is only a mishmash. It's a stalemate that has to be accepted and enjoyed on its own impossible terms. This is why the scene between the punk rocker and the fishermen, so characteristic of Forsyth's sense of humor, doesn't get us anywhere. What begins with a tableau ends as a black-out, never quite working itself up into a scene.

Sometimes these black-outs do end with a bit more of a punchline. Later on, for instance, at a a town social, the punkette throws herself at Mac. Her boyfriend becomes quite upset and asks her what she sees in him. As she ponders this, a little furrow forms in her brow, crumpling one end of the lightning bolt painted on her face. "He's different," she says with a slight Scottish burr on the r. More typically, however, there isn't even this much resolution to a scene. The social has been held to celebrate the sale of the town to the oil company. In another of the evening's episodes, one crusty old Scot says to a friend, "Four generations of farming the land, and now it's come to this." Then instead of falling into melancholy silence, he and the friend go on contentedly discussing whether the millions to which it's come is in pounds or dollars. Either way, it's fine with them.

The open-ended quality of Forsyth's sense of humor makes him a master of the running gag. In *Gregory's Girl*, there is a dilly, a student at the high school Gregory attends who wanders the halls in a penguin costume. The penguin always seems dazed and lost, and someone always tells it impatiently what room to go to. *Local Hero* has an equally enigmatic figure in the person of a motorcyclist who roars through the sleepy village, nearly killing Mac every time he wanders into the otherwise deserted street. It's very hard to elaborate a fixed joke like this that isn't going anywhere. But Forsyth gets (pardon the expression) good mileage out of it. Just when we're to the point where we can see the gag coming, he begins leaving it to our imagination. Mac is nowhere in sight as the motorcycle tears down the street and disappears past a building, from behind which Mac now scampers into view, having obviously had the usual close call. At last a day comes when he steps out of the inn chatting with a business associate, and without even needing to think about it, momentarily restrains the chap from stepping into the street. Whereupon the cycle roars by right on cue.

Forsyth's best scenes always raise more questions than they answer. The one with the fishermen does that, as does a scene in which Mac's business associate is making love to a beautiful female oceanographer who also works for the oil company. This lass seems to spend all her time in the water; in fact, she's just emerged from it and is lying on the rocks in her wet suit, sunning, when the young man decides to try taking a few liberties with her. Tenderly, he begins kissing her feet. But then he stops again because he notices that she has webbed toes. Here as elsewhere, Forsyth gently pries us loose from reality. His Scot's imagination has roughly the same effect on us that Scotland itself has on Mac. We become very mellow. We're sure that even if we do nothing — indeed, despite the fact that there's nothing anybody *can* do — everything will work out well in the end.

In *Local Hero*, as in *Gregory's Girl*, everything does. The villagers are paid a fortune for their homes without actually having to give them up. They're very happy about this, and the oilman, Happer — he's happiest of all. The only person who seems a bit forlorn is Mac, because he has to return to Texas. The closing shot is of the call box from which he has kept in touch with the company headquarters every day. Now that he is back there, the phone is ringing away madly with no one to answer it. Who could that be, calling? We can't really figure it out, like most things in this film. But it's nice to think about.

COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

Martin Galvin

Eating Around the Gizzards

Not even sick, I fall to chicken soup
in the kitchen where I sometimes live.
The broth is thick with cures,
C's of corpuscular celery,
noodles to whiten the jaundiced eye,
onions meant to strengthen breath.
Odd bits of chicken check everything
from rickets to sclerosis.

I eat it all, spoon it in like penicillin,
castor oil, Carter's Little Liver Pills,
all into my mouth and down the gullet
like heaven's medicine, all except
the gizzards that lump the bottom
of the dish like sunken lungs
or fallen angels' wings.

Those I eat around and around
until they are alone, staring up
from the slicked bowl as sad
and reproachful as old diseases
I think I am well rid of,
I am sure I have never had.

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Direct from the Vatican

TOM O'BRIEN

DESPITE THE HOOPLA that has greeted the Vatican exhibit beginning its American tour at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, you might leave it, as I did, intellectually informed but spiritually unmoved. This is not because it lacks significant works of art — it contains many, including the famous Apollo Belvedere, *The Deposition* by Caravaggio, the tapestry of *The Miraculous Draught of the Fishes* after a design by Raphael. But "many" is almost a source of the problem — there is a manysidedness about the exhibit that leaves it without an emotional focus. The total experience inspires respect, but not joy.

Consider the title of the show: "The Vatican *Collections*: The Papacy and Art." The accent throughout is *plural*: the *collections* include sculpture, paintings, and artifacts collected or commissioned (and eventually housed in churches and museums) by popes over sixteen centuries. What the Met has mounted, in short, is a museum within a museum — a hodgepodge of Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, Egyptian, Modern, and Third World art. Collectively, therefore the exhibit amounts to a tour, superficially coherent only because it derives from one source. The only distinct impression that you get on leaving is that the popes, indeed, have collected great art — at least until the eighteenth century, when humanism and clericalism parted paths.

Perhaps my response — and search for something of larger significance — was stimulated by the vast media attention that heralded the first coming of these treasures to America as some sort of second coming. For weeks before the opening, the press detailed how the show pieces had been lovingly packaged, lavishly restored, elaborately shipped, heavily indemnified, and laid out with consummate care and craftsmanship by the Met staff. Indeed, never in the course of artistic events has so much been printed about the setting up of an exhibit, and so little about the exhibit itself. Cynics may dismiss all the publicity as hype to boost ticket sales. The Met defenders claim, of course, that giant art exhibits serve a democratic purpose, and that all resources of public relations must be mobilized to attract the widest possible audience.

Either claim, however, ignores a secondary motive revealed in the publicity and evident in the arrangement of the show itself: curatorial narcissism. That is, regardless of an ideology of public service or hidden motive of public ripoff, there is a very private note about the show: it seems of, by, and for art historians rather than the average, even intelligent viewer of art. Everywhere there are signs of the sincere pride of the Met staff in convincing the Vatican to establish this temporary colony overseas. They are delighted, with reason. The exhibit demonstrates how antique works can be restored, how *this* work inspired *that*, how papal taste fit in or set general trends, how the popes excelled as curators, etc. The exhibit is thus about museuming, not surprisingly, the Met's meat and drink. But somehow I can't accept that their delight in process must be our delight in product.

THE LAYOUT — the best ever on a Met blockbuster — testifies to the enormous love that has been lavished on this show, but ironically also points to its core problems. The pieces are not presented in a clutter fashion; even with crowds, one should be able to view them in an orderly and reasonably moderate way. Visual continuity is provided through the figure of the roman arch, present in some form in almost every room. Most entrances and exits are set at slight angles to provide a sense of flow from one part of the exhibit to the next. Colors are subtly shifted from warm to neutral tones as a backdrop for romanesque and medieval art to cooler gray, white, and ocher for livelier Renaissance and Baroque pieces.

Such extraordinary effort in displaying the exhibit bears testimony to a sincere desire to provide the best possible conditions for viewing the art — a response, no doubt, to criticism of such crowded, hectic shows as "The Age of Spirituality" and "Alexander the Great." But it also illustrates the essential hollowness of the show: the really dominant work of art in the exhibit *is* the layout. Intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, there is no other center.

The art historian's view might have been forced by the limits on choices from the Vatican. Some masterpieces simply could not be moved, the Sistine Chapel for example, or Raphael frescoes such as *The School of Athens* or Parnassus. There are none of the great statues, e.g. no Canova's, no Laocöon, no Pietà. Instead, we are asked to *think about* Michelangelo through a statue that inspired him — the Belvedere Torso, the central fragment of a larger limbed sculpture from the first century B.C. whose powerful frame and massive muscled tension served as model for the figures of God and Adam on the Sistine ceiling. The Torso is impressive, but it is Michelangelo's power *at a remove*. The whole episode in the show is an odd — intellectual and unemotional — way to represent the greatest artist that the papacy has ever known.

Even with the limits of the show pieces, there could have been a different plan that might have made a more powerful collective impression. For example, in addition to the Torso, there is some mildly impressive ancient statuary, the

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Augustus of Prima Portia, the Eros Centocelle, and the Apollo Belvedere, a Roman copy of a Greek sculpture that so inspired eighteenth century neoclassicists. But these statues are set out in several different places — the arrangement, the Met explains, is determined according to *when* popes acquired pieces, not *when* they were first created. In short, if you want to think or meditate on the ancient statues, you have to hop back and forth. But then of course it's not ancient statuary that we are supposed to be observing here: it's the Vatican Collections.

THE MET could have, perhaps, centralized these works, culled parallels from its own galleries, and opened an exhibit on ancient sculpture. Alternatively, the Met could have made the Raphael tapestry, the anguished mannerist Caravaggio *Deposition*, Leonardo's *St. Jerome in the Wilderness*, and some of the Vatican Fra Angelicos into the core of a strong exhibit on religious art of the Renaissance. As they stand in the Vatican exhibit, the impact of these works is diluted amid the clutter of inferior paintings, other styles, and other periods of art. To speak plain truth, a viewer would learn more of the *spirit* of medieval or religious art in the Met's own galleries. But perhaps it is not spirit we are supposed to be looking for either.

Of course art museums do not survive by spirit alone: according to the current ideology of their directors, they survive by "the really big show" which appeals to a mass audience and generates support from industry and government. The Vatican exhibit was carted gratis by Pan Am; its installation has been sponsored by Philip Morris ("A great company brings you great art," some of its advertising explains); and the catalog has naturally been made a Book-of-the-Month Club selection. This marriage of culture and commerce has existed for some time, happily reducing corporate taxes; the only new ingredient here is Catholicism. But with Cardinal Cooke a Trustee of the Met, and, together with Archbishop Marcinkus of the Vatican Bank a director of Friends of American Art in Religion, this was only a matter of time. The exhibit thus marks the convergence of the religion of art and the art of religion around the current central dogma: there is no salvation outside of blockbusters.

Blockbusters, or special exhibitions, can serve a powerful function — the *Pietà*, for example, lent by the Vatican to the 1964 New York World's Fair or Rembrandt's *Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer* which, when acquired by the Met, was placed on special exhibit befitting a masterpiece on the first floor. Approaching it, one could ponder its significance — who was this Homer, I remember thinking as a child, who Aristotle, and why did Rembrandt so contemplate *them*. Situated alone, it focused attention and raised imagination — and as I later found out — spoke volumes about ancient culture and modern envy.

Not having such masterpieces in this show, or even a set of impressive pieces from the same period, the Met staff has buried the issue of content of the whole under a mass of quantity; curatorial enthusiasm over the *parts* probably helped to pull the wool over their own eyes. But without an emotional center for a blockbuster, its art easily degenerates from an aesthetic experience to a cultural event; going there becomes like buying obligatory opera tickets, liking every Meryl Streep movie, even watching *The Winds of War*. There is a motto on the Belvedere Museum: "procul este, profani"—closed to low brows. Blockbusters are suppposed to correct this elitism, but the Vatican art exhibit at the Met confirms it by asking the profane masses to settle for something shallow. When I went, Guido Sarducci was there taping a segment for *Saturday Night Live*; sadly, his presence did not seem incongruous.

Books: GETTING ON WITH THE TASK

THE PRIORITY OF LABOR
A COMMENTARY ON "LABOREM EXERCENS"
Gregory Baum
Paulist, $5.95, 152 pp.

George G. Higgins

MICHAEL NOVAK, author of *Democratic Capitalism*, has observed that "one of the most interesting features of *Laborem Exercens* is that both the right and the left have acclaimed it." He notes, for example, that Gregory Baum, writing in *The Ecumenist*, reads the encyclical for "its extended critical and creative dialogue with Marxism," whereas four "respectful and sympathetic" observers, writing under the auspices of the Heritage Foundation, believe that the encyclical "confirms the basic principles and practices of liberal capitalist democracies, which they as Catholic scholars have come to cherish." While Novak says that "in some sense, both of these readings seem correct," he has made it clear in more than one public forum that he himself profoundly disagrees with Baum's interpretation of the document. Novak points out that Baum stresses those aspects of the encyclical which seem to encourage "collectivism" and "planning," whereas, in Novak's opinion, "the greatest single stress of the encyclical falls upon the human person, the concrete individual, the *subject* of human labor."

To make a long story short, it would appear, alas, that we are getting bogged down again in the perennial either/or, black-and-white debate about "democratic capitalism" on the one hand and "socialism" on the other — and presumably never the twain shall meet. It is regrettable, I think, that the debate about the encyclical has taken such an ideological turn. I say this, among other reasons, because both "democratic capitalism" and "socialism" carry so much partisan baggage and are fraught with so much

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ambiguity that they have become, at least in North America, little more than shibboleths. And while shibboleths are fun to argue about, they really don't get us very far in the real world.

In my opinion, if I may say so respectfully about two very good friends, Novak and Baum are, in varying degrees, jointly to blame in this regard. (Since they have both commented extensively on *Laborem Exercens*, I assume that they will not object to being paired here as surrogates for their respective followers.)

Novak's name has become almost synonymous with "democratic capitalism." It is not surprising, then, that he has concluded, in all honesty, that the encyclical is basically supportive of his own economic philosophy. Baum, for his part, claims to have found in the encyclical a defense of "socialism." He explicitly says more than once that the economic system proposed in the encylical is definitely a form of socialism. I myself would prefer a different word than that, but, semantic preferences aside, by the time Baum has finished embroidering the word "socialism" with qualifying adjectives, the word has lost much of its historic meaning.

It seems to me, then, that both writers (and the rest of us as well) would be better advised to analyze the encyclical on its terms and in its specific terminology rather than their own, for the fact is that the document, in certain key respects, is critical of both "socialism" and "capitalism" (neo- as well as "rigid" capitalism) in the historically situated and commonly accepted meaning of these ambiguous terms.

Now back to Baum's excellent commentary on *Laborem Exercens*. A close reading of Baum's tightly reasoned and carefully nuanced analysis of the encyclical clearly shows (*pace* Michael Novak) that Baum is most certainly not in favor of "collectivism" in Novak's italicized and obviously pejorative use of the term. It is also clear that Baum fully subscribes to the encyclical's repeated emphasis on man-woman as the *subject* of human labor. In fairness to Baum, it is important to make these points explicitly and with emphasis, lest Novak's capsule-like summary of Baum's reading of the encyclical be interpreted or misinterpreted to imply that Baum's position on the two matters referred to above (or on any of the other major issues covered in the encyclical) is at odds with that of John Paul II. That simply is not the case.

I would also point out that while Baum holds (and correctly so, in my opinion) that the encyclical does, in fact, reflect an "extended critical and creative dialogue with Marxism," he himself is incisively critical of orthodox Marxism on all essential points. In fact, Baum's commentary on the encyclical is, in this particular respect, the best I have seen thus far. When you stop to think about it, of course, this is not surprising, for, to the best of my knowledge, Baum is one of the few English-language theologians who can honestly claim to have made a serious in-depth study of Marxism. His neoconservative counterparts cannot hold a candle to him in this regard.

It is to Baum's credit, parenthetically, that he is far more critical of Marxism and of state socialism than any of his conservative or neoconservative counterparts in North America have been of capitalism in their own commentaries on *Laborem Exercens*. By and large, the latter tend, and properly so, to be very specific in their criticism of the deficiencies of socialism, including democratic socialism, but, conversely, they tend to slip into vague generalities when, if ever, they get around to talking about the deficiencies of capitalism. As Joseph L. Walsh has acutely observed in a discerning and well-balanced review of Novak's *Democratic Capitalism* (*Cross Currents*, Summer 1982), apologists for "democratic capitalism" have performed a necessary and useful service in pointedly raising all of the hard ethical questions about socialism, including, again, democratic socialism. Walsh argues, however, that if they want to be heard by those in the third world and elsewhere who may be attracted to socialism, they will have to look more closely and less apologetically to the systemic problems of capitalism, will have to cease projecting onto pro-socialists their "own pre-

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Official Publication Authorized by the Vatican Museums • Message by Pope John Paul II

This handsome, oversize volume superbly pictures and documents the sculptures, paintings, tapestries, mosaics, and vestments that comprise the collection of Vatican treasures now on view at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. It has 272 illustrations, including 161 in resplendent full color. "The best way to appreciate this unique exhibition is to see it," says reviewer John Barkham, "but for readers without the opportunity to do so this volume is a wholly representative substitute." Look for it at bookstores, or use the coupon to order by mail.

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political view of socialism," and will have to meet the critics of capitalism on their own ground and in quite specific terms. In short, they can rightly be asked to be as constructively critical of capitalism as Baum is of Marxism and state socialism. Baum is far ahead of them in this regard, and they will have to run very fast to catch up with him.

I noted above that Novak, by implication at least, faults Baum for stressing those sections of the encyclical that emphasize the need for "planning." On this point, the burden of proof is on Novak. The fact is that the encyclical explicitly calls for both national and international planning. Baum accurately reflects what the document says about this matter.

Planning, as called for in *Laborem Exercens*, does not mean "collectivism" or "statism," Baum knows this perfectly well and has said so quite explicitly. "*Laborem Exercens,*" he writes, "envisages a central planning that invokes the participation of many institutions. Government itself is not the planning agency. Pluralism must be institutionalized even in the economic infrastructure. The encyclical speaks of 'a wide range of intermediate bodies,' with economic purposes, enjoying 'real autonomy' with regard to the public powers and pursuing their aims 'in honest collaboration with each other and in subordination to the demands of the common good.' "

Proponents of "democratic capitalism" and American neoconservatives in general attach great importance, and rightly so, to such "intermediate bodies," but, unless I have missed something in their writings on this subject, they tend to see these intermediate structures as being parallel to the corporate structures in the domestic and world economies and do not envisage their being institutionally involved, as autonomous bodies with economic purposes, in the economic decision-making process of either individual nations or of the world community of nations. I could well be wrong about that, of course, but that's my honest reading of the fairly extensive neoconservative literature on the role of intermediate structures under a system of "democratic capitalism." In any event, those who disagree with the encyclical's emphasis on the need for economic planning should direct their criticism at the document itself and should not try to put the monkey on Baum's back. In advocating decentralized, pluralistic planning, he has, to repeat, accurately reflected both the letter and the spirit of *Laborem Exercens*.

Many neoconservatives appeal to the principle of subsidiarity as an irrefutable argument against any kind of central economic planning. Baum meets this argument head-on, and effectively so, in my opinion. "The traditional principle of subsidiarity which was designed to protect the small units capable of looking after their needs from interference by a higher power," he correctly points out, "was complemented by the principle of socialization, enunciated especially by Pope John XXIII, which said that whenever smaller units are unable to provide for their members, then higher levels of authority must promote cooperation so that people will be protected. Small is beautiful, but, big whenever necessary. In industrial society, big is unavoidable. The creative tension between the principles of subsidiarity and socialization is replayed in the present encyclical in the double demand for democracy at the workplace and for the planning of the economy." People are free, of course, to disagree with *Laborem Exercens* on this point, but, again, they ought to aim their fire at the document itself and not at Baum who had nothing to do with its preparation.

Enough of that, however. Baum's book, which I highly recommend (not as the last word on the encyclical, but as an extremely intelligent commentary on its contents) covers more points than I can even touch upon, much less seriously discuss, in this review. Let me switch gears, then, and conclude with a bit of wishful thinking as to where we might go from here.

On the face of it, Novak and Baum (if I may again pair them here as representative types) appear to be almost irreconcilably at odds with one another in their widely divergent, indeed almost contradictory, readings of the encyclical. Certainly they themselves seem to think that this is so. It is not for me, of course, to disagree with them in this regard. I realize that in many ways they are miles apart in their social thinking. Yet I sometimes think, perhaps naively, that they may have a wee bit more in common than they themselves realize or would care to admit on the record.

Baum says, for example, that "the principle of decentralization (the democratization of the industries) and the principle of centralization (the planned economy) constitute a dynamic process in society that protects the well-being of all and the relative freedom of persons and groups of persons." I take it that, to Novak, this somehow smacks of "collectivism" or "statism." Yet Novak, for his own part, also seems to acknowledge the need to "democratize" the workplace, although I have the impression that he would gag at the word itself. In any event, he does not disassociate himself from the encyclical's call for a "continued revision of (rigid) capitalism" aimed at giving workers a greater share in the management, ownership and/or profits of corporate businesses. In my opinion, he greatly exaggerates the degree to which this "revision" has taken place or is currently taking place in the American system of "democratic capitalism" — but that's another matter. The point is that while his vocabulary differs radically from Baum's, he, too, sees the need to reconcile the principle of decentralization with the principle of centralization, although, again, he would never use that precise terminology. He does say, however, that "the task which lies ahead of Catholic theology . . . is to give more consideration to theological conceptions of the person and the community."

Call it wishful thinking on my part, but I persist in entertaining the faint and flickering conviction (or at least the vague impression) that if Novak and Baum (and all the rest of us) could declare at least a temporary moratorium on the use of ambiguous and ideologically loaded terms such as "democratic capitalism" and "socialism" and could concentrate, if only for a time, on the grubby task of trying to reconcile, in very practical, non-ideological North American terms, the principle of subsidiarity and the prin-

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ciple of socialization (in Baum's terminology, decentralization and centralization, and in Novak's terminology of "the twin values of the inimitable person and the common good"), we might begin to get somewhere.

Unless I am badly mistaken, the likely alternative is to go on aimlessly debating theoretical and highly ambiguous concepts which may be useful, within limits, as academic tools of the trade but are less meaningful, even to intellectuals, and much less useful to economic and political practitioners in the dangerously unsettled 1980s than those who are ideologically stuck with them seem to think they are. I am sorry to be so pessimistic and embarrassed to sound so anti-intellectual, but unless even the conservative press is lying to us, we are in a terrible economic mess both at home and abroad, and, to my way of thinking, a prolonged theoretical and partisan debate about "democratic capitalism" versus "socialism" is not likely to be of much help to us in getting out of it.

Of lies, luxuries, & literature

KATHERINE ANNE PORTER
A LIFE
Joan Givner
Simon & Schuster, $15.95, 456 pp.

Martin Green

JOAN GIVNER'S excellent biography of Katherine Anne Porter raises a familiar challenge to lovers of literature in unusually clear form. The challenge lies in the extraordinary lies Porter habitually told. Most of the biographer's work has been to discover the truth that lay hidden behind Porter's stories about herself, her family origins, her marriages, her life in general. (She went to extraordinary lengths; apparently pretending even to her lovers that she still menstruated regularly, long after she had stopped.)

Isn't a writer supposed to be dedicated to the truth? Moreover, these lies are not irrelevant to Porter's work, for it is clear that she chose above all things to be a writer, and that this meant so much to her — that work brought "Katherine Anne Porter" into being — because it legitimized her self-invention. She wanted to be an artist because artists are liars.

The stories themselves have a strong moral message, as Dr. Givner says; which is a condemnation of passivity. One must not submit to circumstances, or to other people's wills; such submission means complicity in their evil; and rebellion means going away, starting afresh, re-inventing oneself, asserting oneself.

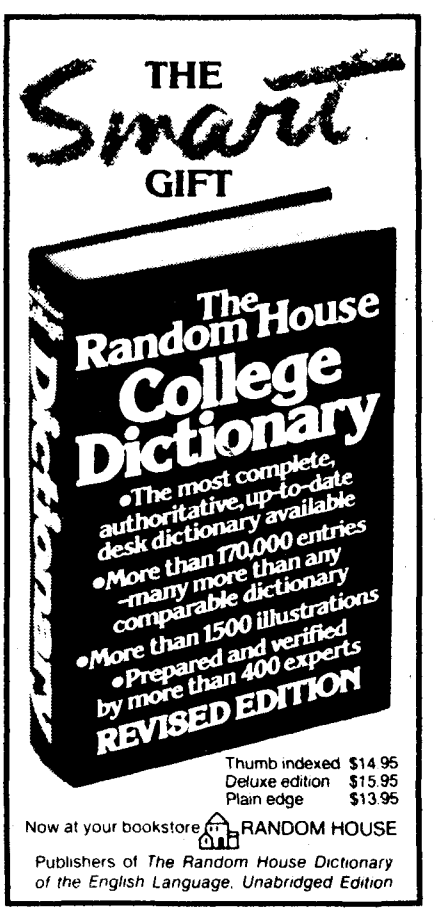
She associated passivity with "virtue," which she also condemned. A principal target of her scorn and resentment was her ex-friend, Dorothy Day, after the latter chose a life of self-sacrifice. Porter believed in self-assertion — not in dominance over others, but in freedom to play. Her art was a specially intense form of that larger play, her life.

Indeed, there was more to the connection than that, for her self-invention gave her personality that sparkle and charm which played a part in her extraordinary literary success as well as her short stories. It was personal friends like Allen Tate, Caroline Gordon, Malcolm Cowley, Edmund Wilson, who recommended her for fellowships and publication, and it was her stage performance at conferences and readings which won her many of her readers.

Born in 1890 on a dirt farm in Texas, Porter was raised without social or educational advantages. (The account she gave of herself — even her name, her age, her family situation, the house she was born in, the class she belonged to — she radically falsified, both to friends and in her "autobiographical" stories.) She married at sixteen, a marriage which lasted nine years, and only at the end of that time did she become aware of "modern" literature, and think of becoming a writer (a journalist) herself. Her first aspirations within the world of art were to the theater.

She first glimpsed the sort of career she would in fact pursue in 1917 when she met Jane Anderson, a beautiful newspaperwoman who traveled in Europe, had many affairs and wrote artistic short stories. Porter's own writing then was a column about social events, theatrical performances, and shops, in a Denver paper. The Porter we can recognize came into existence in Greenwich Village in the 1920s — after she was thirty, therefore. That was where she made her literary friends, that was where she heard about Mexico, that was where she began to write the stories we know.

It was of course her work her friends recommended to magazines and publishing houses, and that work was in some ways unlike her glittering social personality. (Even in her beauty one saw a contrast between the almost conventional prettiness and the marked pallor.) Her stories bear the stamp of melancholy and hypersensitive solitude. There is nevertheless the likeness between them and the personality, that both set a very high value on the imagination — especially the artist's imagination — as opposed to reality.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I'm not now talking of her stories' themes or theses, but of their artistic character. Typically monologues in an assumed voice, their interest lies in provoking our guesses at what the writer thinks of the speaker. They work by suggestion and ellipsis, by evocative resonance, by what they leave unsaid. The form is controlled by the interplay of two sensibilities, the speaker's and the author's. When Porter tried to deal with a complex and substantial reality, whose interest was independent of her reactions to it, she failed; as in her account of the Sacco and Vanzetti trial, or her attempted biography of Cotton Mather.

Tolstoy, it may be recalled, said artists were people who added new flavors to life, as do jockeys, whores, chefs, and modistes. He intended, of course, to condemn the greatest works of art as well as the smallest — to include *War and Peace* in that condemnation. Fictions are extensions of freedom, constructs of play, within which the flavors of experience can be multiplied. Most of us find that in, say, *War and Peace*, there is substance as well as flavor, because so much truth is reflected in the fiction.

Porter, however, is an example of the kind of artist to whom Tolstoy's remark applies in a commonsense way. Other examples are Jean Rhys, Katherine Mansfield, Colette — all, incidentally, women who went on the stage briefly. (There are comparable groups of men, but that would take us too far afield.) It is appropriate that in the 1950s Porter's most steadfast admirer was the managing editor of *Mademoiselle*, who steadily wooed her with flowers, perfumes, purses, etc.

It was in a special Beauty issue of *Mademoiselle* that Porter wrote her defense of Circe, which expresses her kind of feminism; Circe was in fact a queen of life, who only revealed to the Greek heroes what pigs they really were. In later life Porter spent a lot of money on jewelry (especially emeralds) and furs and liquor. Her taste inclined somewhat to the gaudy, but it was a very fine taste, and she was able and ready to work at her luxuries (she was a notable cook, for instance) as well as at her art. But still she was eminently a connoisseur of luxury, and herself one of life's luxuries, from a Tolstoyan point of view.

Obviously Porter was an extreme case, and cannot be said to represent writers in any average way, in the close interconnection between her literature and her lying (and her luxury). It happens that I read, alongside this biography, another writer's which brings out literature's devotion to the truth; a case which is all the more different for having superficial points in common. George Orwell also changed his name, deserted his social class, cut off old connections, as he became a writer — in a sense re-invented himself. And his recent biographer, Professor Crick, spends as much time as Dr. Givner in checking the accuracy of Orwell's "autobiographical" writing; indeed, both biographers come up with similar formulae — they say their subjects invented nothing but re-arranged everything. But in Orwell's case these maneuvers were all in the service of serious values, amongst which truth was pre-eminent; at the very least, Orwell *claims* to be telling the truth everywhere, and his account could be condemned if he were found to be lying. Porter's stories are always innocent, because she served the imagination; always innocent and largely empty.

Her sophisticated literary friends knew that she "served the imagination," even if they did not know the facts she was departing from. Truman Capote wrote one story that is acknowledged to be about Porter, and I have always found his Holly Golightly (in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*) a suggestive allegory. Holly has invented herself, and all her friends know that — it is her charm as well as her sin — even before they discover the truth about her.

There is also a striking diagnosis of Porter by a writer who did *not* know her; when I was her student, in Ann Arbor in 1953, I was strongly reminded of D.H. Lawrence's story "The Lovely Lady," even though at that point she only *suggested* that story's denouement. A decade or so later, however, Porter became entirely entangled in her own fantasies and self-projections, and a rancorous egotism disrupted her psychic economy, poisoned her relations with others and defaced her charm. She ended terribly, like Lawrence's character.

But more interesting than moral diagnoses is the way her character as self-inventor *recommended* her to, and *sustained* her with, her literary friends. And this is so interesting because they were so intelligent, were in fact leaders of literary taste in America for a generation. Her triumph over reality was part of what made her seem to them America's supreme artist — in the 1950s and 1960s she *had* that reputation with quite a few opinion-makers. This phenomenon of course relates to the idea, so important to the post-1918 literary generation, that art is a transcendental game, an alternative to reality. It was an idea which always threatened to de-substantialize literature. And surely Porter is a case that shows how that threat could come true.

Missed opportunities, endless possibilities

MARILEE

Elizabeth Spencer

Univ. Press of Mississippi, $3.95, 64 pp.

TO SEE YOU AGAIN

Alice Adams

Knopf, $13.50, 305 pp.

Robert Phillips

THE ROAD not taken: The theme occasionally gives rise to important art. I allude not to Robert Frost's famous poem (which merely posits the thesis but does not explore it). Rather, I mean works such as Henry James's *The Jolly Corner*, in which the protagonist—clearly James—returns from London where he has lived for decades to explore the New York house he might have continued to inhabit. At every corner he encounters the ghost of the self he might have become. More recently John Updike's Rabbit trilogy contains a character very much like Updike himself had he never won a scholarship, left Pennsylvania, lived in London, and become a writer.

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Now we have Elizabeth Spencer's *Marilee*, a trilogy of stories centered upon a character about which the author states, in a foreword, "If I'd stayed put, there's a bare possibility, I like to imagine, that I might have been something like her." That possibility seems less bare than apparent. Marilee (who dabbles in local real estate) might be Elizabeth Spencer had she not lived in Rome and Montreal, and written among other fine fictions *The Light in the Piazza*. The road not taken, with Spencer, is also the one held high in imagination, and that has made all the difference. These are among her finest stories.

"A Southern Landscape," the first, introduces the reader to Marilee, her family, and the town of Port Claiborne, Mississippi. It pivots upon Marilee's courtship by one Foster Hamilton, young Southern gent who drinks because he likes to, but who can switch into sobriety at a moment's notice, usually whenever Marilee's mother approaches. Port Claiborne, the ruined Windsor mansion, and even Foster Hamilton's drinking represent the unchanging in a changing world. As Spencer says, "There have got to be some things you can count on, would be an ordinary way to put it. I'd rather say that I feel the need of a land, of sure terrain, of a sort of permanent landscape of the heart."

The second tale, "Sharon," is briefer but flares suddenly like a struck match. Sharon is the home to which Marilee's Aunt Eileen brings a black domestic upon marriage, like a dowry. After Eileen's premature death, the black Melissa stays on, taking care of the house and—unknown to Marilee but known well enough by the family adults—taking care of all of Uncle Hernan's other needs besides. The story's epiphany concerns Marilee's encounter of the couple embracing. She then realizes that Melissa's four devilish children also are Uncle Hernan's, and her cousins:

"I felt differently about them now. Their awful racket seemed a part of me—near and powerful, realer than itself, like their living blood. That blood was ours, mingling and twining with the other. Mama could kick like a mule, fight like a wildcat in a sack, but she would never get it out. It was there for good."

The trilogy concludes with "Indian Summer," about the wildness still inherent in Marilee's Uncle Rex, despite his having settled down and married. All three stories pit decorum against instinct, and are filtered through Marilee's ironic sensibility. Author Spencer indicates in the foreword that she may not be done with Marilee. We hope not. We'd like to know what happened to Melissa after Uncle Hernan dies, why Uncle Andrew moves to Illinois, whether or not Uncle

REVIEWERS

MSGR. GEORGE G. HIGGINS *is adjunct lecturer in theology at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.*

MARTIN GREEN *teaches in the English department at Tufts University. His books include* The Challenge of the Mahatmas and Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire.

ROBERT PHILLIPS's *third collection of poetry,* Running on Empty, *was published last summer by Doubleday.*

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Rex has further dreams, and more. For those who are not acquainted with Spencer's shorter fiction (collected abundantly in *The Stories of Elizabeth Spencer*, Doubleday, $15.95) *Marilee* is a dandy place to begin.

Alice Adams's stories have appeared in every O. Henry award collection for the past ten years — which must be something of a record. Her first collection, *Beautiful Girl* (1978), was intelligent and well-crafted, mostly stories about love. *To See You Again* shows a widening of range and subjects, and an admirable ability to shift point-of-view from character to character.

While the majority of her stories are set in California, where she now lives, others collected here are set in Mexico, Europe, the South, and Washington D.C. The Mexican stories show Ms. Adams at her best and worst. When she writes of tourists or expatriates, she is marvelous, as in "At the Beach," a story of the uncertainties of older age (a theme she also explores in "A Wonderful Woman"). Her description of the pair of octogenarians who grace the Mexican resort reveals her visual command:

> The arrival of the elderly couple, down at the beach, at almost precisely noon each day, is much noticed; it is when they look, perhaps, most splendid. In trim dark bathing suits, over which they both wear white shirts, in their hats and large dark glasses, advancing on their ancient legs, they are as elegant as tropical birds . . .

It is when Ms. Adams attempts to write of the unworldly that she gets into trouble. In "Teresa" she tries to get under the skin of a Mexican native girl who suffers two tragedies. It is a more primitive tale than Ms. Adams's usual story of quiet epiphanies — more Isak Dinesen than Elizabeth Bowen. Teresa is the least convincing protagonist in the book. It is as if the author needs the trappings and familiar actions of "civilization" to fully comprehend her characters' motivations.

The other unsatisfactory story in the volume, curiously enough, is the title piece, which seems a sketch for a much longer story. We really do not know enough about the heroine's husband and marriage to understand his hold on her. But in a big collection of nineteen stories, Ms. Adams is forgiven two misses.

The usual Adams character does not give in to his or her fate, but attempts to shape it, however misguidedly. In both "The Girl Across the Room" and "By the Sea," women become aware not only of missed opportunities, but also of life's endless possibilities. Alice Adams is not overly pessimistic. In both "Lost Luggage" and "Berkeley House," serenity is achieved through great loss. She is a highly knowledgeable writer of psychological states. "The Break-In" is fashioned upon Oedipal rivalry, and "Related Histories" explores coincidence and similarity in the lives of separated lovers — Jung's synchronicity. "Reality" is no concrete thing in her imagination; after reconstructing the life of one Carstairs Jones, in "Truth or Consequences," she admits, "But of course I could be quite wrong about Car Jones. He could be another sort of person altogether; he could be as haunted as I am by everything that ever happened in his life."

One of my favorites in the book is "At First Sight," in which a poor little rich boy spends his youth in his long room in a cold, modern odd-shaped house, telling himself stories in which he is the son of some very plain but substantial midwestern people who live in a big plain square house that was warm. By the end of the story, now an adult, he has found his surrogate family in the place he least expected to find them. He also has found the love of his life. Ms. Adams accomplishes all this with great economy. William Blake said, You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough. Alice Adams knows the latter. She suppresses and condenses, allowing the reader to make vital connections between situation and character.

Correspondence

(Continued from 162)

thinkers, some of whom are first class and deserve esteem and respect, even admiration — a qualified admiration), it is one's duty toward what is highest in the world to use the knife (and there is no point in being too gentle)."

VINCENT ROSSI
Director General
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Hegelian virus

Hillsborough, Calif.

To the Editors: John W. Glaser urges us to look forward to Epoch III ". . . and IV, to the pregnant, African pope — and far, far beyond" [Jan. 28]. Shall we then expect Pope E. T. in Epoch V? Has it ever occurred to him that the futurological theology from which these sorts of ecstatic visions issue is incredibly dubious? It is fashionable today amongst intellectuals afflicted with the Hegelian virus to castigate the alleged "male chauvinism" of the Catholic church. Strangely, the church used to be castigated for emasculating men. This paradox can be resolved in some weird dialectical historicism. But a more logical explanation is that the church has antagonists on all sides. This is why Germanic thought is so alluring to Catholic intellectuals. It expresses a frozen mentality, a mentality of paralysis. It is particularly unfortunate for Catholic intellectuals in America to encumber themselves with this philosophical apparatus. In America the church has, to use a fashionable word, the "infrastructure" to maintain and advance Catholic intellectual initiative.

As for Rahner's thesis that Vatican II represents the beginning of the process by which the Catholic church will become substantively universal, the negative proposition of the meaning of this, i.e., the end of European dominance, is intellectually unsatisfying . How easily this translates into the end of the domination of intellectual civilization by philosophers whose heritage is in the Enlightenment. Mr. Glaser's visions represent simply a bathetic example of pre-Vatican II Catholic triumphalism. On what will Epoch III Catholicism stake its claim to being triumphant? In Mr. Glaser's view, it will be that Catholicism is appealing to women.

No steps forward, two steps downward.

JOHN E. BLECK

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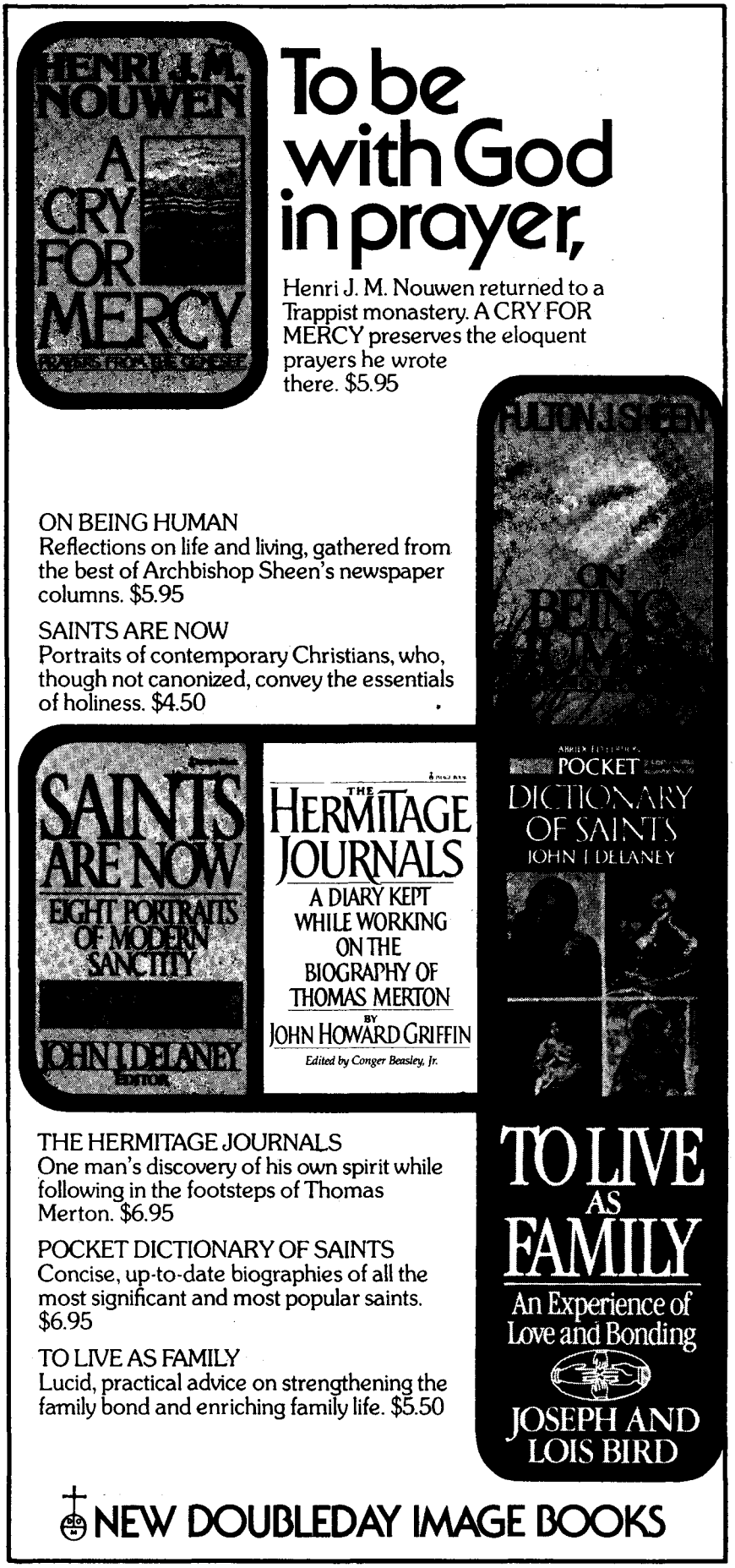
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Literature and the Arts: Katharine Byrne: "A Different-Looking Orwell" . . . Maureen Mullarkey: "Eric Gill in the Flesh" . . . Anthony Ugolnick: "Godzilla and the Real World" . . . Frank McConnell on the "Vanishing Family on TV" . . . Saul Maloff on Bernard Malamud . . . Derrick Henry on the World of Classical Records.

Scheduled for Future Issues: Elliott Wright: "The Supreme Court" . . . Janice A. Brown: "The Bulgarian Connection" . . . Frank McConnell: "The Talk Shows" . . . Alan Dowty: "Religion and Politics in Israel" . . . Nicolaus Mills: "Frank Lloyd Wright and American Modernism" . . . R. Dinardo and O.L. Carrescia: "Guatemalan Refugees' Story" . . . Thomas Higgins: "Our National Health Policy."

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